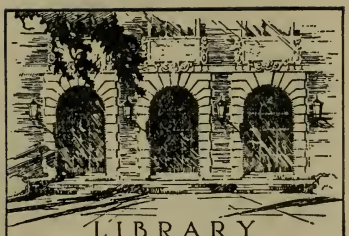

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MARGARET GRAHAM.

VOL. II.

MARGARET GRAHAM:

A Tale,

FOUNDED ON FACTS.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "THE GIPSY,"

ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER X.

THE WIDOWED BRIDE.

Let us return to Margaret. By the time that eleven o'clock had arrived, she had grown somewhat anxious, but she consoled herself by thinking that poor Ben Halliday might very likely require more immediate and constant attention than her father; but when twelve o'clock came, and Dr. Kenmore neither came nor sent, she became seriously

alarmed. The next question was, what she should do. Her father still slept, but there were only two maids in the house, and the nearest cottage was nearly half-a-mile distant. It was necessary to do something, however; and after revolving the matter in her own mind for some minutes, she sent the elder servant down to the Rectory House at Allenchurch, with directions to call up the clergyman, who was a very worthy man, and tell him all the circumstances.

It luckily happened that the rector was composing his sermon, and had not yet gone to bed; and putting on hat and coat, he came down instantly to Mr. Graham's, bringing his man servant along with him. After a kindly consultation with Margaret, and en-

deavouring to allay her fears as much as possible, he sent his servant to Brownswick, in the belief that Dr. Kenmore might have returned to his own house for some medicines for the two sick men. In about an hour, however, the servant returned, with the worthy surgeon's own footman, bringing intelligence that he had not been heard of at Brownswick. The matter now became serious, for it was by this time two o'clock in the morning, and Margaret felt sure that if necessarily detained so long, Dr. Kenmore would have sent some one to inform her of the fact. Some cottagers were roused from their beds, lanterns were procured, and, headed by the rector in person, the whole party set out from Allenchurch to trace the

good surgeon's course up to Ben Halliday's house. Spreading out for some way on each side of the road, they walked on, and reached the top of the hill without discovering anything of him they sought for. The good rector began to hope that they should find him at the cottage; but when they approached it, all was dark within. To make quite sure, however, they knocked, and Ben's voice was heard immediately after, saying, "There is some one knocking at the door, Bella. Get on some clothes, and see what they can want at this time of night."

"We want to know if Doctor Kenmore is here," said the rector, speaking through the door; "you need not trouble yourself

to open, Mrs. Halliday; only let us know where the doctor is, if you can."

"Oh dear, sir, he has been gone from here these five or six hours," said Ben Halliday's wife. "Has he not got back yet?" and at the same time she opened the door.

"I am sorry to say he has not," answered the rector of Allenchurch.

"Then he must be at Mr. Graham's, sir," rejoined Mrs. Halliday, as if the thought struck her suddenly. "I know he was going there, for I heard him say so."

"He was expected," answered the clergyman, "but has not returned; perhaps he may have taken the short paths over the moor. We will go and see."

Now it happened that there were two roads between Allenchurch and the village at the top of the moor, by either of which a foot passenger or person on horseback might reach Ben Halliday's cottage. The public road was the easiest and best in ascending the hill, for it was not so steep as the other, which was not fitted for carriages. From habit more than aught else, the searching party had taken the broad way in ascending, but they now pursued the narrower bridle-path back towards Allenchurch. The lanes leading to the moor offered nothing to call their attention; but within five hundred yards after they began the descent, close by a spot where stood the remains of an old

cottage or hut, long abandoned, they saw, by the moonlight, something dark lying on the road before them, and one of the men, running quickly forward, exclaimed, "Here he is, poor old gentleman! He's fallen down in a fit."

"Do not move him," cried the rector, who knew, from Margaret's account, that he had a large sum of money on his person when he left Allenchurch; and, hurrying forward with the lanterns, he stooped down over the body.

"Here is blood," he said, as he gazed; "this is no fit."

Doctor Kenmore was lying on his face, with his head towards Allenchurch, as if he had fallen descending the hill. His hat lay

at least ten yards further on, and at first all present imagined that he had not been moved since he fell; but a very little inspection showed them that such was not the case. The pockets of his coat were turned inside out, and so were those of his trowsers; but, strange to say, his gold watch and chain, the seals appended to which were quite visible, had not been taken. Yet the silver buckles were gone out of his shoes, and the gold head had been wrenched off his cane, which lay bent underneath him. On further examination, a severe contused wound, as surgeons term it, was found on the back of the head, which had actually driven in the skull, and his face was somewhat cut by the gravel,

apparently as he fell. The wound had bled a good deal, and stained the road, but no instrument which could have inflicted it was found near, unless it were a large stone, weighing fifteen or twenty pounds, which lay at the side of the path; but no hair or blood was to be found upon it. The hat, however, was dented in, and stained with a little blood in the inside, so that it had evidently been on his head when he was struck. No footmarks were found near, nor any evidence of a struggle having taken place. The crime seemed to have been suddenly perpetrated, and the murderer to have taken his victim quite by surprise.

The rector of Allenchurch made strict examination of every circumstance; and

the peasants, who loved the old man, as well as his own servant, were profuse in exclamations of pity and regret. The clergyman only made one remark—that it was strange that his watch had been left; and then gave orders that the body should be removed to Brownswick, all signs of life being extinct having been found present, even to perfect rigidity of the limbs. Another and more painful task than that of accompanying the poor surgeon's body to his late home was before the good clergyman. He had to break the tidings to Margaret Graham; and, from long and intimate communion with his fellow-creatures, he had too clear an insight into the human heart to doubt that she would be

very much afflicted. That she had loved Dr. Kenmore with the deep and passionate attachment of youth, he did not at all believe, and, indeed, Margaret had never affected to do so; but that she had a sincere and strong friendship for him, nay, an affectionate regard, stronger though not warmer than friendship, he did fully believe, and he felt sure that she would mourn his fate with grief little less poignant than if she had lost her father. The mode, too, in which death had reached him was very painful to relate; and as he walked on and pondered, accompanied by his servant, he determined to give her no particulars, but merely to tell her that her husband had been found dead on the common, and that

a coroner's jury would be summoned immediately, in order to ascertain the cause of death. This was distressing enough; but many of the tasks of a clergyman are so, and he was too frequently called upon to administer comfort upon various sad occasions to be at a loss upon this. Yet there was a certain difficulty, too, not to render his manner too commonplace, lest Margaret, for whose feelings and for whose character he had a sincere respect, should shun his consolations, from a belief that he judged her marriage with the old surgeon harshly and wrongly, and yet not to attribute to her a warmth of attachment which he felt did not exist.

The object of all these considerations met

him as he entered the little parlour of the cottage, with a face pale and anxious; but the worthy rector delayed his answer to her questions for a moment by asking kindly after her father.

"He is much better," she answered; "he woke about an hour ago, quite himself, and has since fallen asleep again —but, my dear sir—"

"I am very glad to hear it," replied the rector, "for that will be some comfort to you. I trust that your earliest and best friend may be spared to you for many years —nay, my dear young lady, sit down and listen to me. You have lost one who was deservedly dear to all who knew him, and to you more than all; but you must not

repine at the will of God; and as you know that there never was any one who on this earth acted a more truly Christian part, so you may well trust that he has only gone from a scene where happiness is never unmingled with pain, to pure and perfect felicity in the bosom of his Redeemer."

Margaret sat down and wept, quietly, but bitterly. Then stretching out her hand to the worthy clergyman, she said, in a low tone—

"Tell me all. How did it happen?"

"The particulars, my dear young lady, we do not yet know," replied the rector. "It would seem he took the small footpaths back from poor Halliday's cottage over the moor; and after having gone up by the

ordinary road, we found him as we came down the other way. He had fallen upon the path, and it is probable he never moved afterwards."

"But are you sure?" exclaimed Margaret. "Is there no hope of restoring him?" I have heard ——"

"It is quite in vain," said the clergyman: "life had been extinct some hours when we found him. Do not buoy yourself up with one false hope; for nothing can restore to you the friend you have lost on this earth; and your chief thought must now be your care for your good father. A coroner's inquest must, of course, be held, and then, perhaps, we shall learn more than we know at present."

Margaret asked many questions, but those she did ask were wisely answered; for her mind never turned in the painful direction from which the rector sought to lead it. From seeing the attacks to which her father had been lately subject, she was fully possessed with the idea that Kenmore had fallen a victim to a similar fit seizing him when all aid was absent, and in that belief she remained till the following day revealed to her the particulars of her husband's fate. Then, indeed, she was dreadfully shocked, and her distress was increased by being called upon to give evidence before the coroner's jury. She went through that task, however, as she did all that fell upon her at this period of her life,

with calm, quiet, graceful fortitude, and, strange to say, so much true feeling mingled with her grave tranquillity, that no one even in his inmost thoughts accused her of insensibility. She proved that when Dr. Kenmore left her father's cottage he had a considerable sum of money upon his person, but that, to the best of her belief, no one was aware of the fact but herself and the gentleman who had paid him the amount. His servant, indeed, might know it; but the man had been sent back from Allenchurch to Brownswick, and easily proved that he had never quitted his master's house till summoned to search for him. The three persons who had met the old surgeon at

the top of the moor all testified that when they saw him he was walking along with a stout step, and no other evidence of any kind was to be procured. Suspicion turned in various directions; but the general feeling of the country was expressed by the countryman who, with his little boy, had last seen the good doctor before the murder, and who said, in giving his evidence,—

"I am sure it must have been some stranger who did it, for there is not a man in all the country round who would have hurt Doctor Kenmore."

The coroner's jury, however, were forced to return a verdict of "Murder against some person or persons unknown," for they

had no means of arriving at a more definite judgment; and, as usual, the story of old Doctor Kenmore's marriage and death on the same day made a week's marvel, and was then forgotten by all but those more immediately concerned.

Margaret knew not well how to act under the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed, and therefore she did the best thing she could; she asked the rector of Allenchurch and the lawyer of her late husband to act for her. The funeral took place with as little ostentation as possible; but many hundreds of the people of Brownswick and the neighbourhood spontaneously followed the body to the grave. The iron safe in which the deceased had

kept his papers, was broken open, for the key could not be found, and the first thing that was discovered was his will, by which he left to Margaret Graham, about to become his wife, or to Margaret, his wife, if the proposed marriage should have taken place before his death, all his property, real and personal, and appointed her his sole executrix and residuary legatee, taking care to guard against all cavil, almost as if he had anticipated the very fate which had befallen him. Of what his property consisted had been accurately known only to himself before his death; but everything was in good order, and in the end it appeared that his wealth was much more considerable than had been supposed. On the

examination of all the papers, Margaret found herself in possession of considerably more than a thousand per annum, principally accruing from lands in the neighbourhood of Brownswick, though there was also no small sum invested in the public funds; the savings of a long life of industry unstained by aught like parsimony or meanness. There was one passage in the will which brought tears into her eyes, for it was a mark of confidence which she felt deeply.

"Knowing dear Margaret Graham well," the good man had written at the end of the paper in his own hand, "I cannot do better for my old servants than by leaving them to her care, and begging her to re-

ward them according as their services to me may appear to deserve."

The servants had no cause to regret that their old master had not provided for them more specifically, and they all remained with her to whose care they had been confided.

But Margaret's sorrows were not yet at an end. The fate of poor Doctor Kenmore was necessarily communicated to Mr. Graham, and the effect upon his spirits was even more severe than Margaret had anticipated. Gloom seemed to take possession of him entirely, and for some weeks he could not shake off the sad impression. His daughter's devotion and care were unbounded. Her whole time, and apparently her whole thoughts were devoted

to him; but she could not succeed in rousing him, till she bethought her of calling for his counsel in the management of the landed property which had so unexpectedly become hers. From that moment Mr. Graham seemed to recover a portion at least of his former energy. His old servant Ben Halliday was called to advise, and assist, and direct. Plans of improvement were suggested, and their execution commenced, and Ben, engaged as a sort of labouring bailiff, was brought down to the cottage at Allenchurch, which Margaret had so long inhabited with her father, while they removed to a neat small house to the westward of Brownswick. All seemed fair and smiling, when one morn-

ing, about six months after the death of Doctor Kenmore, his old schoolfellow was found dead in his bed with a placid smile upon his face and the eyes fast closed, as if he had expired in sleep so calm that death itself had not power to break it. Margaret had again to weep, though she praised God, nevertheless, that a short period of renewed prosperity, a bright gleam of sunshine at the end of a stormy day, had been granted to her father before night fell.

She was now alone in the world, without a tie, without a connexion, but those whose conduct in the days of adversity had severed the bond between her and them for ever.

Did Margaret ever think of Allan Fair-

fax? Let us not inquire too closely. If she did, she tried hard to avoid it; and yet how could she help it. It was her first love—nay, her only love. She had never loved but once—she never did.

Part the Third.

THE LAST TRIAL.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESOURCE FOR DISAPPOINTMENT.

With the reader's good leave and permission, I will turn awhile to one of whom I have not spoken for some time; namely, Allan Fairfax. I cannot take up his history exactly where I left it, though there is one scene in that history of deep interest, which I should much wish to write even here. The construction of my tale will not

let me; but I promise to return to it hereafter, and give its details. I must therefore pass over about a fortnight in silence, and, for the moment, leave the reader's imagination to fill up the interval as it will.

It was barely grey daylight, on the morning after the murder of Doctor Kenmore, when some one knocked at the door of Ben Halliday's cottage, and the little boy Charlie, who was already up, opened it, and beheld Mr. Fairfax, with one of the porters of the "White Lion" inn behind him. The young gentleman's face was pale and haggard, his dress not so neat as usual, and there was a look of melancholy wildness about the eyes, which struck even the little boy very much.

"Is your father gone to work?" asked Fairfax, as soon as he saw him; "I have come to get my portmanteau, Charlie, and to bid him good-bye, for I am going far over the seas, to the land of lions and tigers."

"Oh! no, father is not gone to work," replied the boy; "he can't go. He's been very ill, and was dying, like, till Doctor Kenmore blooded him."

Something almost approaching a groan broke from the lips of Fairfax; but at the same moment Ben Halliday raised his voice, saying in a feeble tone, interrupted by a cough, "Wont you come in, sir?—my wife will be here in a moment;" and Fairfax entered the cottage, and walked up

to the sick man's bed-side without saying a word. For a few moments he remained in silence, gazing at Ben Halliday with an absent look; but then rousing himself, as if by a great effort, he said—

"So you are ill, Halliday — what has been the matter?"

"Oh! dear, sir, I am glad to see you," said Mrs. Halliday, entering the cottage; "my poor husband has been at death's door, with inflammation of the lungs, the doctor says. But he's a deal better now, only the cough is troublesome. All the pain is gone, and he can breathe easy."

"It is unfortunate," said Fairfax; "he will be out of work for some time, I am afraid, Mrs. Halliday," and he mused for a

minute or two. "Take up that portmanteau, my man," he continued, speaking to the porter, "and carry it down. Let it be put upon the coach with the other things. I will be down almost as soon as you."

The man charged his shoulder with the load, and walked away; and then Fairfax sat down for a moment, saying—

"I cannot stay now, my good people; but I am very sorry for you, and would willingly do what I can to assist you. Here, Mrs. Halliday; here are five sovereigns to help you through your husband's illness. I am somewhat richer than I was, Halliday, so you must not mind taking it."

"Oh! Mr. Fairfax, I cannot indeed," said Ben Halliday; but Fairfax beckoned

to the wife, and she, like a wise woman, suffered him to put the money into her hand, thanking him a thousand times for his goodness.

Fairfax stayed a few minutes longer, almost all the time plunged in deep thought, and then rose suddenly to depart.

"God bless you, sir!" said Ben Halliday, as the young gentleman shook hands with him; and Mrs. Halliday also said, "God bless you!" and the boy and girl looked earnestly in his face, as if they would have said the same, but for shyness. But at the same moment, a head was thrust in at the other door, and a face grinned at him maliciously, while the voice of Tommy Hicks cried—

"You have sent away my seat, and I'll spite you, if I catch you."

Fairfax shook his fist at him; and bidding the cottagers adieu, took his way back towards the town with hasty strides.

"How ill Mr. Fairfax looks," said Mrs. Halliday, speaking to her husband, "and so sad, too."

Ben Halliday shook his head gloomily, and answered—

"Ay, Bella, there's many a bitter story amongst the rich and the great, as well as among the poor and the lowly. A fine coat often covers a sad heart; and I am afraid Mr. Fairfax has cause to regret that he ever came down to Brownswick. Well, he is a fine, noble gentleman, God bless him!"

In the meanwhile, the person they spoke of proceeded on his way till he reached the town of Brownswick, and walked through the streets to the door of the "White Lion," at which was standing the morning coach for London, with the horses being put to. Fairfax saw, though he hardly noticed, a number of groups of the townspeople standing at the corners of the streets, and talking eagerly together. The guard and the coachman, too, as they bustled about round the coach, and in and out of the office, exchanged a number of sentences with a party of idlers who were standing near; but Fairfax heard not a word of what they said; and pausing for an instant at the inn-door, he called for

his bill, and paid it without going in, gave waiters, and chambermaid, and boots the usual fee, and putting on a thick great coat, which was officiously held for him by several of the people of the inn, he inquired if his luggage had been put up, and then took his place upon the coach-box. In a minute or two, the coachman was by his side; two fat, elderly ladies rolled out of the office and into the vehicle; a dull-looking man got upon the top; and away the coach went for London as fast as the four greys could carry it.

Nothing of any kind occurred on the journey which would interest the reader in the slightest manner to repeat. Allan Fairfax arrived in safety, about three

o'clock on the following day, at an inn in the giant of cities. He instantly set out for the chambers of a lawyer in Gray's Inn, gave a number of directions, signed several papers, and then said—

"Now, Mr. Tindle, you must manage all the rest of my affairs yourself, for I shall set out to-morrow morning early for Plymouth. I shall there catch the *John Green* East-Indiaman—at least I hope so—and I trust to be in India and with my regiment in a few months."

"Dear me, sir, you surprise me," cried the solicitor; "why, when you left London, you intended to sell out; and I can't act in this business, or any other, without a power-of-attorney."

"It does not matter, Mr. Tindle," said Fairfax; "all my views are changed. If a power-of-attorney is necessary, you must get it ready directly, and let me have it to-night at the inn where I am staying in the City; I will sign it immediately."

"But will you not see your brothers, sir?" asked the solicitor. "I am sure they have acted very handsomely in this business."

"When they could not do otherwise," answered Fairfax, bitterly; "you will say, probably, that they might have protracted the affair by a suit-at-law; but I must ever feel, Mr. Tindle, that by affecting to believe there was some ground for my father's wild—I must call it insane notion

regarding my birth, and taking advantage of that to deprive me for so long of even an equal share of his property, they dissolved every tie between us. I wish not, in the slightest degree, to have any dispute with them; and trust that, if ever I return from India, we shall live on amicable terms; but I cannot forget the past, and therefore shall go away without seeing them. You may say anything civil on my part that you like, when you come to wind up the whole affair, but it would be better for me not to see them at present."

"But will you not want money, my dear sir?" inquired the lawyer; "money, without which, as you have lately found,

nothing is to be done on this earth. I am sure if, under present circumstances, I can be of any service—"

"No, no," answered Fairfax, "I have enough for the moment. Many thanks to you, however. When the whole is finished you may pay a thousand pounds into the hands of my agent, as I shall want to buy some horses and other things when I get to Calcutta; and now, pray get the papers ready directly, that there may be no delay; for, signed or not signed, I go at five o'clock to-morrow."

And Allan Fairfax went. At Plymouth he caught the vessel he expected to find, embarked, and reached Calcutta in safety. His fellow-passengers remarked how cold,

and grave, and disagreeable he was, and his brother-officers, when he rejoined his regiment, observed that Fairfax was sadly changed. The gay, light spirit was gone; the brilliant fancy that played round all things, no longer enlivened his conversation; but stern thought seemed to have taken possession of him, and to hold him bound as in a chain. Always famous for his gallantry, Fairfax was now rash; and in the despatches from one of the many fields which have lately been fought in India, his name was twice marked—once as deserving public thanks for his services against the enemy, and once as severely wounded.

There was an eye which read the des-

patch in England, and a cheek that glowed warmly at the account of his chivalrous daring. But when the list of killed and wounded was read over, and Margaret Graham came to the words, "Captain Allan Fairfax, severely," there were tears dropped upon the paper, and she laid it down with a heavy sigh.

Two years had passed since Fairfax was at Brownswick, and Margaret had laid by her widow's weeds. Young, beautiful, graceful, excellent, and bright, who with free heart and hand would not have sought her? But the life she lived was so retired that no one had any opportunity of pleading love. She came upon the people in the neighbourhood by glimpses. Some persons

were necessarily admitted on business. The rector of Allenchurch, and the vicar of Allerdale, dined with her often, with their wives, bringing the daughter of the latter: the former had no children. But Margaret had made a hard bargain with them, that they were never to ask her in return. There was only one other person of whom she saw much; and that was a Miss Harding, who had acted as bridesmaid on her marriage to Dr. Kenmore. She was the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, who, at his death, had left her in great poverty; but she had received a very good education, and sang beautifully. Without hesitation, she had instantly applied herself to earn her own bread by teaching music, and she had been

Margaret's first instructor. Her conduct had been praiseworthy in every respect; her manners were graceful and ladylike; and though she was fifteen or sixteen years older that her pupil, a friendship had arisen between them, which Mr. Graham had always encouraged, though his wife had not appeared to approve of it. In the day of their adversity, Miss Harding had been of service in many respects; and now she was Margaret's frequent companion during her solitude, taking part in her pleasures, and, with a gentle cheerfulness, brightening a house into which melancholy thoughts would still intrude frequently.

One day, when she was sitting with her friend, shortly after the news of the battle

which I have mentioned had arrived in England, she looked up from the part of the newspaper she was reading, asking—

"Did you not once know a Mr. Fairfax, Margaret?"

"Yes," answered Margaret, with a sudden start. "Is there anything about him there? —I did not see it."

"It is about some relation of his, I suppose," replied Miss Harding. "See here—'Death of Sir William Fairfax.—We regret to announce that Sir William Fairfax, Member for the Western Division of the County of ——, departed this life on Tuesday last, at his house in Portland Place. He is succeeded in his title and the family estates by his cousin, Captain Allan Fair-

fax, who lately distinguished himself so much in India, the late baronet having only left daughters. Sir Allan is expected daily in England.' "

Margaret was drawing; and she continued to draw; but after a few minutes, she rose and left the room; and when she returned, Miss Harding thought she had been weeping. From that moment the latter never mentioned the name of Fairfax in Margaret's hearing. Two more months passed over without any event, and Margaret Graham reached her four-and-twentieth birthday. Miss Harding passed the day with her, and Margaret would fain have engaged her to stay several more; but her friend replied—

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"I cannot, Margaret. I am engaged to-morrow evening to Sir Wild Clerk's, to sing, you know," she added, with a smile, "and I have still to gain my bread."

"You need not, unless you like, Eliza," replied Margaret.

"What, change the friend for the dependent, Margaret?" said Miss Harding; "no, no; it is better as it is. At all events, I must go to these good people, for I have promised; but, if you like, I will come back the next morning."

"I do like, very much," answered Margaret, with a smile; and so it was settled.

CHAPTER XII.

A COUNTRY ROUT.

THE party at Sir Wild Clerk's was as large as the neighbourhood of Brownswick would furnish. He was a wealthy man, a man of ancient family in the county, and, in fact, a very good sort of person; but he had been seized with a desire of seeing his eldest son, a raw lad from college, represent a borough in parliament, and therefore he crammed

his house full once or twice a month. Something had delayed Miss Harding till more than one half of the guests had arrived. She expected no very great attention; she knew that she was invited for her voice, and as she had no vote, that if she had not been able to sing and amuse others, she would not have been invited at all. She was accustomed to the thing—had made her mind up to it, and therefore was not at all surprised that, with the exception of two or three of her pupils, who, in the simple kindness of a young girl's heart, greeted her warmly—nobody took much notice of her till Lady Clerk asked her to sit down to the piano, and she sang a little ballad, of which she was very fond, and Margaret also.

At the end of the first stanza, she raised her eyes, and saw a gentleman standing beside the lady of the house (who seemed to be paying him very great attention), with his face turned towards her, gazing at her steadfastly. She thought him remarkably handsome, and certainly there was something in his air and manner which distinguished him from every one else in the room. He was a young man, too, tall and spare in form, with a face very pale, and an air of thoughtful gravity which always has something of dignity in it. The moment that her eyes met his, he averted his glance, and continued with his head bent, as if to hear what Lady Clerk was saying; but yet there was a look of abstraction on his face, which did not

seem to show any great attention. When her song was done, the lady, to her surprise, moved up to thank her and to express her pleasure, and she was followed by a stranger, who was introduced to her by a name which she did not hear; for a patronizing connoisseur young lady—they are a class—came up to declare she was enchanted, and to beg that the next thing she sang might be "So-and-so."

Miss Harding sang it at once, though she disliked it very much, and then retiring, quietly took a seat in the next room, till she should be called upon again. There was a vacant chair on one side of her, and a deaf old lady on the other, who asked her why she did not sing that night; and while she

was explaining, as well as she could to one who could not hear, that she had just been singing, the gentleman to whom she had been introduced came and sat down beside her.

"That is a delightful ballad, Miss Harding," he said; "I mean the first one you sang, not the second, which did not please me as much. Can it be procured? I have heard it once before; and to hear it again has the effect of the poet's spice winds in the Indian seas, which bear over the wide waters the perfumes of bright lands left far away. It calls back happy days that never will return."

"I do not know that any one has a copy of it but myself and one friend," replied Miss Harding; "the music was composed

by my father, who is dead; the words by a young friend, who is dead also;" and she sighed.

"May I ask who is fortunate enough to possess the other copy?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, yes," she answered; "it is Mrs. Kenmore, formerly Miss Graham. Perhaps you may have heard her sing it."

The stranger's cheek flushed for a moment, as if the sudden blaze of a fire had flashed upon it, and then turned deadly pale again, but he made no answer for several moments. When he did speak, he asked, somewhat abruptly—

"Is she still living in this neighbourhood?"

"Oh, yes," replied Miss Harding; "she

is living at her house at Nutley, about two miles from this place. Indeed, she never quits it."

"I have just heard," said the stranger, in the same abrupt manner, "that her husband is dead."

Miss Harding gazed at him for an instant, for she thought his tone was very strange; and she saw that his eyes were fixed upon a spot on the floor, while his lip was quivering, as if with strong emotion.

"Yes," she replied, coldly, "he has been dead for more than two years. He was murdered on his wedding-day."

The stranger started as if she had struck him; but for several minutes he uttered not a word, and thinking him both odd and dis-

agreeable, she was going to cross the room to some people whom she knew and saw at the other side, when he renewed the conversation with a very much altered manner.

"You must think me very strange," he said; "but first your song, and then your conversation, recalled times long past, and persons long gone. I must not make you think me quite a savage, however, although I have lived long in very uncivilized places, which must plead my excuse for all that you see odd. The sight of white people thronging the roads and thoroughfares does not always bring back our European notions at once."

"Have you lived, then, so many years amongst blacks?" demanded Miss Harding;

"I should think you had hardly had time to forget the customs of your own land; but I certainly do not mean to imply that you have done so, although some of your questions were abrupt enough."

"Time to forget!" repeated her companion—"it does not depend upon time, my dear lady. Time slowly grinds out the characters of the past: there are events that efface them in an instant. Long habits, cherished ideas, feelings that we think engrafted in our very nature, will sometimes give way under bitter sorrows, or severe disappointments, or acts which sweep the world of the heart like a hurricane, and leave nothing to be remembered but themselves."

"I know it," replied Miss Harding.

"Do you?" inquired the stranger; "I am sorry for it; for none can know and comprehend such things but those who have suffered them."

"Women often suffer more than men know," replied his companion; "but they have greater powers of submission, if I may use the term. They have an instinct that they are born to endure, and they endure more patiently than men."

"Or perhaps than men can conceive," replied he.

"Assuredly," answered the lady; "we have an instance of it very near. I do not believe that any man could imagine, unless he had seen and known it all, step by step,

how much has been endured with unmurmuring patience and high resolution by Margaret Graham—for I must still call her so. She is ever Margaret Graham to me."

"Oh, yes, call her so, call her so," said the stranger, earnestly; so earnestly that the lady gazed at him, but no longer with surprise.

"You must have known her well," she said.

The stranger did not reply for a moment, and then answered, in a low tone—

"I thought so."

"Then you did," replied Miss Harding, warmly, "for no one can ever be deceived in Margaret Graham."

"Did you ever watch the clouds," asked

the stranger, "when, on a calm autumnal day, they float slowly along the verge of the evening sky, changing their forms as they pass along, and showing us, now snowy mountains and towering alps, now castles and palaces, kings' thrones and heads of giants; now wolves, or lions, or crocodiles, or sometimes a mighty eye looking out in radiance upon us from the midst of a thick veil? Who can say how much of all we see is the work of our own fancy, how much in reality the forms presented to us?"

"I have," she answered, "and have often thought those cloudy shapes are true images of the objects of man's desires. But Margaret is not one of those shapes. The finest essences exist in the most solid substances.

Though her imagination may be as varied as the clouds you have spoken of, the beauty of her character is in its reality."

"I applied my illustration to myself, not to her," replied her companion; "I may have fancied what does not exist—I have often done so with inanimate objects, why not with a thinking being, without that being having any share in the deceit?"

"I cannot answer your 'why not,'" said the lady, "and yet I do not believe it. There is a convincingness in Margaret's truth which makes me feel that it is almost impossible to mistake her."

"And does she live quite alone?" demanded the other, suddenly changing to another part of the subject.

"I am often with her," said Miss Harding; "but at other times she does live quite alone."

"And is she happy?" asked the stranger.

"Nay, what a question!" exclaimed Miss Harding, with a smile. "If you will define happiness, perhaps I may be able to answer you."

"That is impossible," he said; "it is one of those simple objects, which, like the great facts of an abstract science, are felt, though undefinable. We know what they are, we admit them to our minds at once. They are truths—to man's moral consciousness what an axiom is to his intellectual faculties. We do not doubt them, though they cannot be explained to us, nor by us to others. I

have known what happiness is in myself. I have seen it; but, alas! it is rarely that those who deserve it best find it in this world—but there is another."

Miss Harding was about to reply, but at the moment one of the daughters of the house approached to ask her to sing again, and the conversation dropped.

"Who is that gentleman?" she inquired, as she walked towards the piano with her young companion; "I did not hear the name when Lady Clerk introduced him."

"Oh, don't you know?" replied the girl, "that is the Indian hero, Sir Allan Fairfax."

Miss Harding mused, but made no reply.

CHAPTER XIII.

RE-UNITED LOVERS.

"COME, Eliza, put on your bonnet, and go with me to Halliday's cottage," said Margaret, the morning after the party at Sir Wild Clerk's.

"Oh, stay a little while, till I have finished copying this song," replied her friend; "we shall have plenty of time afterwards."

Margaret stayed; but Miss Harding was very long in copying the song, longer than Margaret had ever seen her at a similar task. When it was done, she had some other little matter to do, and she was very slow over that, too. Margaret wondered what could be the matter with her; till at length her companion rose with a sigh, and looked out of the drawing-room window.

"Do you think it will continue fine?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," replied Margaret; "there is not a cloud in the sky. Come, Eliza, you are idle this morning, or tired with that party last night. The air will do you good;" and Miss Harding went to put on her bonnet and shawl, saying to herself,

"Now, he will come while we are out. I do believe there is a fatality in these things."

She did not hurry herself, however; but, nevertheless, she was dressed for her walk, and out of the garden gate with her friend without any visitor making his appearance. Passing on their way, they proceeded through some rich green lanes, the paths sometimes winding on between high banks which shut out the scenery around, sometimes mounting up and affording a view, over the hedge and between the trees, of the sweeping lines of the lower ground, with hill and moor rising purple behind. How beautiful nature often frames her pictures, and how much more they gain by that framework of green boughs, or grey

rocks, or old church window, or heavy-browed arch, than by all the carving and gilding in the world. It was a fine summer's day, bright, yet no longer without a cloud, for a few masses of vapour low down in the sky, white at the edges and fleecy brown at the centre, were moving slowly along through the air, and sweeping the earth with their blue shadows. Margaret often paused to gaze; for, to use a curiously constructed phrase, she had much of the poetry of the painter in her nature. Miss Harding had less. She had more of the ear than the eye; her imagination revelled in sounds, and she was fond of shutting her eyes, not as some people, do to see undisturbed the pictures of fancy, but to hear her songs.

Besides, she was anxious to get back again as soon as possible, so that she often called Margaret forward when her fair companion, all unconscious of what was passing in her bosom, would fain have staid to gaze and meditate, and, with sad memories softened, to dream sweet dreams of what might have been.

Four-and-twenty; it is no unpleasant age. There is nothing like decay in it; the flower has grown and expanded, but not the very edge of a leaf has withered; the perfume of hope must still be in its breast, unless it be blighted, indeed, by some terrible storm. She was looking very lovely that morning; more so, indeed, than ever. Whether it was that, like the chameleon, she took her

hues from that which surrounded her, and that the loveliness of the day made her more lovely, or that some mysterious sympathy told her a change was coming, and brightened her looks with hope and expectation, I cannot tell; but certainly she was very beautiful.

They had gone on for nearly a mile, and were within a couple of furlongs of Ben Halliday's comfortable house, when, suddenly dropping down the bank from the side of a tall ash tree, appeared the broad but stunted figure and disagreeable countenance, with its wide mouth and slightly squinting eyes, of the idiot, Tommy Hicks. He stood right in the way before them, and Miss Harding suddenly stopped, saying, "Ah! there is

that frightful man. He always alarms me. Really, they should shut him up."

"Oh, he will do us no harm," answered Margaret, with a smile. "He is a little inclined to mischief, but more, I believe, in a spirit of fun than anything else; but come on, and do not seem frightened at him, for that always provokes him."

In the meanwhile, Tommy Hicks was himself approaching, talking all the way he came in a low and muttering tone, sometimes laughing, and sometimes swearing, for he was not at all times very choice in his language.

"Ah, my pretty girl," he said, coming up to Margaret, "so you are out walking."

"Yes," answered Margaret, trying to pass him; "it is a fine day, you see."

"For birds to look for their mates," answered Tommy; "but you sha'n't have him—I wont give my consent; it's no use talking, though he were the sun, and the moon, and the stars, you sha'n't have him; and to prevent it, you shall marry me; so come along."

"I am afraid I can't this morning, Tommy," answered Margaret, mildly; "you must let me pass, my good man, for I am going on business."

"No, I wont," answered the idiot; "my business first; you shall marry me here, under the green tree. Then you can't have two husbands in one day, and I am determined that fellow shall not have pretty Meg of Allerdale. May he be ——" and the idiot began to curse and swear most

fearfully. "You can't have two husbands in one day, I tell you; it is against the law. King George would have done the same if he could, but they would not let him; for though King David had nine wives, and his sons increased and multiplied, yet that was a long time ago."

"Let me pass, sir," said Margaret, somewhat sternly, fixing her eye firmly upon him. "Stand out of the way directly."

But idiots and madmen have an extraordinary power of divining whether those who attempt to command them are really frightened at them or not; and Tommy Hicks perceived at once that, notwithstanding her assumed calmness, Margaret was alarmed.

"I wont," he cried, with a loud laugh; "you shall be my wife this minute. I take you for my wedded wife;" and at the same moment he stretched out his hand, and grasped her tight by the arm.

Margaret did not scream, but Miss Harding did, loud and fearfully.

"Hold your tongue," shouted the idiot, without letting go Margaret's arm; "hold your tongue, or I will dash your brains out. Is that the way that bride's maids scream at a wedding?"

As he spoke, the sound of a horse's feet galloping hard were heard, and turning round to look in the direction from which they had come, Miss Harding saw a gentleman on horseback, followed by a servant,

advancing at full speed, apparently alarmed by her cries. He was up in a moment, and off his horse, and the next instant his horse-whip went round and round the shoulders of Tommy Hicks, applied with a right good will and a powerful arm, in a manner which soon sent the idiot howling down the lane.

Margaret Graham turned as pale as death; but the gentleman withdrew his left arm from his rein, gave his horse to the servant, and holding out his hand to the lady, said, in a low tone, "Margaret, do you not know me?"

The blood rushed back again into poor Margaret's face, writing the glowing tale of the heart on cheek, and forehead, and temples. "Oh, yes, I know you," she an-

swered, giving him her hand; "but I have been alarmed, and am agitated still, and faint."

"Lean upon me," said Fairfax, drawing her arm through his, and gazing at her tenderly. Then recollecting that there were others present, he turned to Miss Harding with a smile, and held out his hand, saying, "I must claim acquaintance here, too."

"Willingly acknowledged," replied Miss Harding, shaking hands with him; "but I really think, Sir Allan, that we had better get home again as soon as possible, for Margaret has been very much frightened, and so have I, too."

"It is the best plan we can pursue," an-

swered Fairfax, "if she is able to walk so far. I have been to your house," he continued, turning to the beautiful girl on his arm, "and most fortunately inquired which way you had gone, when the servant told me you were out. Can you walk, Margaret, or shall I send for a carriage?"

"I can walk," she answered, with a faltering voice; "I can walk quite well. I shall very soon be better. I was going to Halliday's cottage to speak of some matters to be done at the farm; but perhaps it will be better to go home now."

"Much," answered Fairfax, and leading her towards her own house, he told his servant to follow with the horses, and for full five minutes walked on by Margaret's

side in perfect silence. It was upon his left arm she leaned, however; and she felt his heart beating in a way which told how agitated he was. Oh, what a host of feelings were there in the bosom of Fairfax at that moment! and poor Margaret, too, what were her sensations! Between these two no word of love had ever been spoken; but there are languages which have no words, and she knew that she was loved. When she had last seen him, he had called her "Miss Graham," and now three times he had said "Margaret." How did she read it? That she had always been Margaret Graham in his thoughts—that she had been his "Margaret" still, in absence, in danger, in suffering, throughout five long years.

She forgave him for calling her so; she felt, she comprehended that he could give her no other name, and so they went on in silence.

Poor Miss Harding would have given all she had to be anywhere else; but wisely and prudently, as soon as she could think of what was wise and prudent, she determined to seem not to see what she could not help seeing; and, therefore, at last, she began to talk herself, as no one else was likely to renew the conversation. "It is a frightful thing, Sir Allan," she said, "that such a dangerous creature as that should be suffered to roam about the country unrestrained. I am sure some terrible accident will happen before the magistrates see the folly of their conduct."

"I will endeavour to have something done in the matter," said Fairfax; "for the idiot's own sake, he ought to be taken care of. Do you remember, Margaret, that strange and almost ludicrous scene which took place with him at Brugh."

"It is a day I can never forget," answered Margaret; "the least circumstance that took place rests as vividly on my memory as if all had occurred yesterday."

"And on mine," replied Fairfax, sadly. "It was an ominous day: so bright in the beginning, so full of joy, and hope, and expectation; so stormy in the close, so dark and joyless and despairing."

"You left the party very early last night," said Miss Harding, abruptly; "at

least, I did not see you after my third song was done."

"I went to bed," replied Fairfax; "I was fatigued, and thought I might as well lie down to rest, if not to sleep; and, to say the truth, as I despaired of getting near you again, I anticipated no great pleasure from the curious crowd assembled."

"Then it was at Sir Wild Clerk's that you met?" said Margaret, looking to her friend; "and yet, Eliza, you never told me he was there."

"I felt very sure Sir Allan would come to tell you himself," replied Miss Harding, "and I did not wish to play Marplot, and spoil an agreeable surprise."

"That was really kind," said Fairfax,

gazing at her with a beaming smile, " besides, what could she have told?" he continued, turning to his fair companion; " only that she met a strange, abrupt, unpleasant man, who treated her for half-an-hour to conversation which was never heard at rout or ball before."

" I certainly did think, for at least ten minutes," Miss Harding answered, laughing, " that you were the most disagreeable man I ever had met with."

Margaret gazed at her with an expression of astonishment which amused her, but Fairfax replied, " And she was quite right, too, Margaret; for I felt that my conversation was very strange. I have seen thirsty men in India, coming near a well, dash

every person and thing rudely aside to get one draught of the water; and so was I yesterday. She spoke of that which I was athirst to hear of, and I forgot all else, courtesies and common forms, and questioned her most rudely."

Margaret cast down her eyes till the silken fringes rested on her cheek, but she asked not what was the subject they had spoken of. The conversation, however, became more easy, and continued so till they came within sight of the house. Margaret's spirits returned, her timidity diminished in a degree, and she could even smile gaily as she asked Fairfax to come into what she called her humble dwelling. What was the deep-seated cause of the smile, she alone

could tell—perhaps not even she—but it was certainly a trusting, a confiding one. She meant it probably as a welcome to an old friend; Miss Harding read it as a promise to a lover; and the moment they had entered the drawing-room, the latter went away to take off her bonnet and shawl.

The room, though not large, was well-proportioned and lightsome. There was nothing sad or gloomy about it; yet when Margaret, with a face which had become pale again, had seated herself in her usual chair, Fairfax stood beside her and gazed at her with an expression not without its melancholy, till, powerful as she was to command herself, the agitation she felt would have some external influence, and

the hand which rested on the arm of the chair began to shake, so that she was forced to withdraw it and let it fall more easily upon her knee. That movement recalled her lover to himself, for it showed him how much emotion she felt, and bringing a chair to her side, he took the hand she had withdrawn in his, and pressed his lips upon it.

"Margaret," he said, "do you think me over-confident? Do you think me too bold to treat you as I do, after an absence of five years? Yet listen to me before you reply. Hear first how and why I do so. You cannot, I am sure you will not, doubt, when I tell you that I loved you better than all else on earth, with the first, deep, sincere, ardent love of a heart which had

loved none other. That love seemed not displeasing to you; and I treat you now as if only a few days had passed since we met and parted, because the time which has gone by, though it has worked a change upon my outward form, though it and the things it brought with it have crushed and bent the light spirit which once mocked at adversity, have touched not in the least my heart or its love for Margaret Graham. I feel as if not an hour had passed since I lifted you from your horse at the gates of Allerdale, as if it were impossible that there could be any other sensations towards each other in your breast and mine than there were at that now distant hour. Nay, more, Margaret; though circumstances occurred,

on which I must not dwell, to make me mistake you, though you yourself, unwittingly I do believe, confirmed my error, nay, crushed my heart, and made me seek death in the battle-field as the only boon I sought at Fortune's hands—"

"Oh, Fairfax! oh, Allan!" cried Margaret, laying her hand on his, "do not, for Heaven's sake, do not say that! Miserable as I was, I should have died had that thought been added to my misery;' and she burst into tears.

Fairfax threw his arms around her, and pressed his lips on hers. "Dear, dear girl!" he cried," "I am answered. And yet, he added, "how could you, Margaret, think it would be otherwise? Did you not

see I loved you? Did you not know it? Could you doubt after what I wrote, that my love was not of a kind to bear life and disappointment easily together?"

"Wrote!" said Margaret; "wrote to me of love? I never received but one short note from you, now not quite two years and a half ago; and there was no word of love."

"I wrote to you two days after I left Allerdale, and though my letter remained unanswered, I hoped still. But it matters not. I can easily conceive, from your mother's conduct to myself, that the letter never reached your hands. I wrote not, Margaret, to ask you to do aught that was wrong. I simply told you my love, and

tried to show you its intensity; and I besought you, if you felt that you could return it, to appeal to your excellent father, as soon as he was well enough to hear you, from the decision of your mother, which I felt sure had been pronounced without his knowledge or consent. I thought I had taken means to ensure that it should reach you safely, but it seems it never did."

"Never!" answered Margaret, eagerly—"never, Fairfax. Had I ever seen it, I should have been saved much wretchedness; for I had such confidence in your honour, that in all the difficulties and sorrows that beset me soon after, I would have written to you without hesitation or doubt, to beg aid, or consolation, or advice. I thought

you loved me, Fairfax—nay, I felt sure you did; but you had never told me so; and love, I had heard say, was with men in general a fleeting and changeable passion. I believed that it might be so in your case, when for more than two long years I heard nothing of you."

"I was far away," answered Allan Fairfax. "I waited for a month in hopes of a reply; and then, still not without hope, I went to seek honour and fortune, if they were to be obtained, in the pursuit of my profession, for I fancied that you might be restrained by others. Then again I never heard of aught that had happened to bring adversity to your door till I returned two years ago—as poor as ever, Margaret. I

came back, indeed, on leave, hardly obtained, to transact some business of importance; for I had received in India a letter from an old and roguish clerk of my father's, informing me that he could put me in possession of papers which would at once remedy the injustice my father had done me, under a terrible delusion, by showing that the delusion was removed before his death, and that he had taken steps to make reparation. My father's conduct to me is a long story, which I will tell you another time. At present, only let me say, that when I arrived in London, I found that this clerk was a prisoner for debt, and that he required the sum of one hundred pounds for the papers he possessed.

The thought of Margaret Graham had brought me back; the thought of Margaret Graham made me resolve to obtain these papers by any means; but I had come away in haste, almost all I had in ready money was gone in the expenses of my voyage home; my noble old uncle was dead, and I had not a hundred pounds in all the world. At the same time, the villain threatened if he did not receive the sum within ten days, to put the papers in the hands of others, or destroy them. I determined to sell my commission to raise the amount, but just then, I heard by accident of all that had occurred to your father and yourself. No, not all, but a part. I hastened down hither, leaving my lawyer to transact the business

in London for me, and here I heard a report which stunned and stupified me. I inquired further; I found the report vary in different mouths. I wrote to you—I had nothing, indeed, as yet to offer but hopes; yet I resolved I would offer those, and if they failed, beg you still to unite your fate to mine, and let me labour for the support of your father and yourself. You know the answer I received. Oh, Margaret, it almost drove me mad."

"I could not help it," exclaimed Margaret; "indeed, indeed, Fairfax, I could not help it! I will tell you all by and by; but now go on. You will forgive me—you will find excuse for me when you hear. What did you do then?"

"I hardly know," answered Fairfax. "I set off for London like a mad man; but by a strange accident, which I cannot now relate, I suddenly became possessed of the sum required. I went away to the King's Bench, obtained the papers, and found amongst them one written entirely in my father's own hand, acknowledging that he had deceived himself—that his idea of my being a changeling was an hallucination, and leaving me an equal share of his large property with my two brothers. They could not resist, and yielded to my claims; my agent advanced money at once; I fancied I should be in time; but I was too late—Margaret had given her hand to another, and all the world was a blank to me."

He paused in bitter thought, and Margaret gazed at him, with tears in her eyes.

"Now hear me, Fairfax," she answered; "I think you know that I will tell you the plain truth."

"I do—I am sure of it, dear Margaret," he replied. "Indeed, it is hardly necessary that you should, for I have heard much of the truth since I came down hither, and should have heard it long ago, had I not hurried away from a scene where I thought all my hopes were blasted, to seek any fate which would afford relief from thought. Yet speak of that letter; for, alas! Margaret, it certainly was very cold."

"If you had known how it wrung my heart to make it so, Fairfax," replied Mar-

garet, "you would have pitied, and not been angry with me. We must, however, speak of painful subjects, and, therefore, I will do it at once. My father was reduced to beggary—yes, that is the term. He was ill, incapable of moving or helping himself in any way; he depended upon me for everything. I could not leave him to go out as a governess; it would have broken his heart, it would have broken mine. I could not even be absent all day teaching, for he had no one who could aid him but myself. We had but thirty pounds a-year to live upon—an annuity upon the life of a man younger than himself, and a cottage which was lent us furnished, by a kind old friend, a surgeon, who had been his school-

fellow. It was all that my father would accept from any one—the loan of that small cottage. I did what I could by selling my drawings to increase our pittance, but suddenly the annuity failed. There was nought before us but the union workhouse, when that kind old man, whom I had known from infancy, who had received me in his arms when I first saw the light, after endeavouring to conceal the fact of the failure of the annuity, after having attempted everything in vain to induce my father to receive aid, proposed to me, as the only resource, to give my dying parent a home and comfort by marrying him. Had he been a young man, Fairfax—strange as it may seem—my heart would have revolted

more than it did. He was the best, the kindest, the most generous of men."

Fairfax turned very pale; Margaret remarked it, and hurried on, not to pain him more than necessary.

"He asked me not for love—simple regard was all he required, or I must have said, No. It was to save my father. I knew not I was loved by him I loved; and I said, Yes. Once having said it, I could never unsay it. For no consideration upon earth would I have broken that promise; you could not have loved me—you could not have respected me, Fairfax, if I had. But then came your letter. Its tone was that of friendship, but not of love; yet how it agitated me, how it shook me, none has

ever known or can know. I determined to trample over hesitations, hopes, affections, which I believed it would be criminal to indulge, though I crushed my own heart with them; but, oh! Fairfax, I knew not I was crushing yours also, or I believe that hour would have killed me. You know the rest, I think, and I will not dwell upon it —that terrible wedding-day and its awful termination. Now tell me, could I have done otherwise than I did?—should I have been worthy of an honest man's regard if I had acted otherwise!"

Fairfax had buried his eyes in his hands, but now he raised his head suddenly, saying, "No, Margaret, no! You are an angel. Oh, let me hope, dear, excellent

girl, that it may be my lot to make you forget, or to soften the remembrance of all you have suffered. Margaret, are you mine?"

"Can you ask?" she replied. "I have shown you my whole heart."

Fairfax pressed her to his heart, and Margaret rested there, with her face hid upon his bosom, and the warm tears of many mingled emotions in her eyes.

Miss Harding gave them more than an hour; and when she came down, at length, Margaret's hand was clasped in his, and she did not attempt to withdraw it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOPES FULFILLED.

It was now that Margaret found how much she had loved. Hers was not a character to encourage and cultivate feelings dangerous to her own peace or obstructive of the full performance of her duties to others, and she had not done so in this instance. On the contrary, she had steadily and firmly striven to keep her thoughts

from resting upon her affection for Allan Fairfax—I do not say she had altogether succeeded, but she had tried — memory would recal his image, fancy would sometimes dwell upon the past, and strive to extract from it hopes for the future; but whenever she found her mind so engaged—whenever she detected the heart in thus endeavouring to betray her peace, she had always made a great effort to recal her wandering thoughts, and give them employment in other things. She had always felt that she loved him, but she knew not how much—she knew not even how much she was capable of loving till love was happy. Oh, then how it overpowered her! how she dwelt upon every look and tone! how she

gave up heart and mind to the one deep and tender affection. Never in the whole course of her long sorrows and adversities had Margaret wept so much as on that night after Fairfax had left her. But it was a clearing shower, that flood of tears; and after it had passed, all was bright and smiling.

Towards dinner-time, on the first day of their meeting again, Fairfax felt himself bound in courtesy to tear himself away from her, and return to the house of Sir Wild Clerk; but ere he went, he made her promise to fix the day of their union when they saw each other on the morrow; and he added—

"I think, my beloved, it may be as well

to inform my worthy host at once of the situation in which we are placed, that neither he nor Lady Clerk may think my continued absence strange or rude. We have nothing to conceal, and therefore it will be best mentioned at once. I am too proud of my Margaret and of my love for her not to be well pleased to have it known that she returns my affection, and is about to be mine."

Margaret's eyes filled with tears.

"Surely I have cause to be proud, too," she said. "Do as you please, Fairfax; whatever you do will be pleasing to me. The family of the Clerks have been very kind, have called often, and asked me more than once to their house; but, I know not

why, all society was unpleasant to me, but that of this dear friend," and she turned her kindly eyes to Miss Harding. Fairfax took that lady's hand in his, and thanked her with peculiar grace for all that she had done for Margaret.

"I trust I am not ungrateful," he said, "towards those who show kindness to myself; but their services to me, my dear Miss Harding, would seem of little value in my eyes when compared with acts of friendship to this dear girl. I trust that I shall have ample opportunity of showing my gratitude, and in other ways than in words, and in proving to you that 'the most disagreeable man in the world' is not altogether the most insensible one."

He smiled gaily as he repeated Miss Harding's expression regarding himself, and then mounting his horse, rode back to Sir Wild Clerk's.

During dinner, every one remarked that although Sir Allan Fairfax often fell into fits of thought, yet that when he did converse, he was infinitely more cheerful and gay than on the preceding day. One of the daughters of his host, a light-hearted, familiar, merry girl, rallied him on his happy looks, declared that she was sure he had met with some delightful adventure in his morning's ride, and insisted upon knowing what it was.

"Let us have a truce till after dinner," said Fairfax, in reply, "and then I'll tell

you, upon my honour, when we have not so many eyes and ears upon us."

"Oh, then, it is a love adventure," said the young lady.

"What, is there nothing but love that requires discretion?" said Fairfax. "But mind, you must be very secret, whatever it is." And after dinner he told her, as a matter of strict confidence, that he was going to be married to his first and only love, and who the person was. This may seem a strange proceeding; but Fairfax calculated justly, and before the party broke up, the secret was known to everybody in the room without his taking any more trouble about it.

Day after day he now spent with Mar-

garet Graham; and when the period which he had promised to remain with Lady Clerk was over, he removed to his own quarters at the White Lion, where he could be more at liberty. Margaret was very happy, and Fairfax was all in all to her. He was a good deal changed, it was true, since the time when she had first known him; he was graver, almost sadder. It seemed as if present happiness effaced with difficulty the traces which past sorrow had left upon his heart. She remarked, too, and so did others, that he never mentioned the word Kenmore; and Miss Harding noticed, almost amused, that her friend's lover never referred in any manner to the period or the circumstances of Margaret's marriage to the old surgeon.

"What jealous creatures these men are," she thought; "it is evident he cannot bear to hear of her having been nominally the wife of another."

It cost Fairfax some trouble, it is true, to avoid pronouncing the name he seemed to hate, but he did it pertinaciously. His bride was always named as "Margaret," to herself and to Miss Harding, of course; but when he had to speak of her to others, it often caused a good deal of circumlocution. He called her the "lady formerly Miss Graham," "Mr. Graham's daughter, of Allerdale;" and to her servants it was always "your mistress." It pained Margaret a little, for she could not help remarking it, and her own feelings towards poor Doctor Kenmore were those of gratitude

and esteem. She did not suffer it, however, to interrupt her happiness much, for she thought, when once they were married, the cause of such conduct would be removed, and she named as early a day as possible for her union with him she loved; for Margaret had no affectations.

All the neighbours became amazingly kind when they found that Mistress Kenmore was about to be married to Sir Allan Fairfax, and she suffered herself, though with a feeling of timidity from long seclusion, to be persuaded to mingle with society. She took more pleasure in it, too; for every one was loud in praise of her promised husband, and only on one occasion did she meet with, or remark, one of

those little touches of malevolence which are often brought forth in the breasts of the discontented by the sight of happiness in others.

"How strange it is, my dear Mrs. Kenmore," said Lady Clerk, "that Sir Allan never mentions you by your present name, and never speaks a word of your first husband—it is quite remarkable."

Margaret felt all the rudeness and the unkindness of the speech, but she answered, mildly—

"His mind reverts more pleasantly to former and more happy days, my dear madam. Indeed, it is much more agreeable to us both to think as little as possible of a period of adversity, sorrow, and suffering,

and to let memory rest on those brighter hours when I was Margaret Graham, and he was simply Allan Fairfax."

But Margaret did not go back to Lady Clerk's any more. In the meantime, all arrangements were made, the marriage-day approached rapidly, and the agitation which Margaret felt—the bright, happy, thrilling agitation, made her feel all the difference between love and friendship. A brother officer of Sir Allan's came down from London to be present at the ceremony; Margaret chose only one bridesmaid, the same who had accompanied her to the altar before; and when Fairfax was about to take leave of her on the day preceding that which was to unite them for ever, he

turned to Miss Harding, and taking up a packet which had lain on the table since the morning, he said—

"Dear Miss Harding, you must show Margaret and myself that you are not proud with two dear friends, and accept this little testimony of our united regard and affection."

"I must know what it is, Sir Allan," said Miss Harding. "Proud you shall not find me; but still there are things, there are feelings which I am sure you would not wish me to give up even for your sakes."

"I should wish you to accept that packet," said Fairfax, with a smile. "It is Margaret's wish, too; and I am sure you

will not refuse her on the eve of her wedding-day."

"But what is it?" said Miss Harding, a little agitated, though she was usually very much composed.

"Open it and see, Eliza," said Margaret; "all I can say is, that Fairfax and I have done our best during the last month to make it what we could wish for you, and if you refuse it, you will inflict great pain upon us."

With a hand which trembled a good deal, Miss Harding opened the thick envelope, but found nothing within but some old and new parchments, and a slip of paper, apparently a catalogue of the rest. At the head was written, "Conveyance of the

Mount Cottage Estate, Adam Brown, Esquire, to Elizabeth Harding, Spinster." Then followed, "Fine and recovery," &c. &c. &c., not one word of which did Miss Harding comprehend.

"I do not understand it at all," she said, gazing bewildered in the faces of her two friends.

"They are the title-deeds, dear Eliza," said Margaret, "of the cottage you have always so much admired, just coming out of Brownswick, and the grounds about it. They are from me and him I love, in our day of prosperity and happiness, to her who was a friend to me in the time of adversity and sorrow. You must not refuse the gift."

"I will not, Margaret," said Miss Harding, throwing her arm round her friend's neck, and kissing her. "I can bear gratitude, for that is very different from dependence."

But when, at an after period, Miss Harding came to inquire of what the gift consisted, she found that the beautiful little cottage was accompanied by furniture as beautiful, and that the grounds Margaret spoke of were not the gardens alone, but the fields around, which rendered her, moderate as she was, independent of the world altogether.

The marriage-day dawned brightly; the church was fuller of people than either Margaret or her bridegroom wished; and

the ceremony was performed, making Margaret and Fairfax man and wife. With a heart thrilling with joy and gratitude to Heaven—none the less because some solemn memories mingled with present happiness—Margaret was led from the vestry to the carriage which was in waiting, and left her native county for a time with him she had loved long and well. At the end of the honeymoon, as it is called, they were to return, and spend a short time at her house near Brownswick, till the old mansion of her husband's family could be made completely ready, for it had been somewhat neglected of late; and we must pass over all that followed the marriage ceremony till they came back. Suffice it, that when they did return,

and when Miss Harding met them in the hall, she looked in Margaret's eyes to read there the tale of her friend's heart, and found pure, unminged joy in every look. Would that we could stop here, where such histories generally come to an end; but Margaret's sorrows were not yet altogether over, and we must trace her course yet a little further.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST CLOUD.

Five or six days passed; visits were received and returned. Allan Fairfax went more than once to Brownswick without telling Margaret why or wherefore; he visited Ben Halliday in his cottage, too, several times; and there seemed to be grand consultations going on. Margaret perceived that there was a secret, but she

only smiled, and let it take its course, for she felt sure that she should know it all in time, and she was so happy, so very happy, that everything took its colour from the hue of her own mind.

At length, on the Tuesday morning, after being absent from the drawing-room for some minutes, Fairfax returned to his beautiful wife with an open note in his hand.

"I must go over to Brownswick directly, dearest," he said; and then, throwing his arms round her, he kissed her tenderly, adding, "I will now tell you, my Margaret, I have bought Allerdale, and in the beloved scenes where we first met, we will pass a part of every year."

"Oh, I am glad to hear it," replied Margaret; "but the money, Allan? I know it was sold for fifty thousand pounds. I hope you have not disposed of your old family estate merely to gratify me."

"Not an acre, dear Margaret," he answered; "I told you, some time ago, that a circumstance which I cannot relate placed in my possession a hundred pounds at the moment when my fate was in the balance for want of money. That hundred pounds procured me a number of old papers of my father's, which his clerk had kept, or rather stolen. Those papers compelled my brothers to share my father's property with me, and the sum I received was more than forty thousand pounds. Since then

some interest has accumulated, so that the amount wants but little of the sum demanded for Allerdale. It is agreed that a part shall remain upon mortgage, and I thought I could not invest my money better than in the purchase of a place so dear to you and me. However, I must go over to Brownswick at once to conclude the bargain."

Margaret was very happy at this arrangement, for all the memories of Allerdale were sweet to her. She had there spent the early, bright days of life; she had there enjoyed in the days of his beneficent prosperity the society of her kind and high-minded father; she had there first become acquainted with him who was now

her husband; and she thanked Fairfax for the thought of buying Allerdale, as if it were all a favour to herself. His horse was soon brought round, his groom was ready at the precise moment named, and Allan Fairfax rode on eagerly towards Brownswick, entered the little town, and trotted up to the door of the dwelling-house attached to the greatest manufactory in the place. A servant in gorgeous livery presented himself, and informed Sir Allan that Mr. Hankum was not at home, but had left word, if he called, that he would be with the other magistrates at the Town-hall. To the Town-hall rode Sir Allan, and after sending in his card for Mr. Hankum to the magistrates'-room, was

soon joined by that gentleman, who was peculiarly polite and courteous. He led the young baronet into a committee-room, and begging him to be seated, said—

"Well, Sir Allan, I suppose all is settled except signing a little memorandum of the terms. It is a beautiful place, and nothing would induce me to part with it, but that I find it takes me away from my business. However, I am delighted that it falls into the hands of a gentleman of such distinction, and a friend of poor Graham's, who, I may say, made it."

"You are very kind," replied Sir Allan, "and I think we may as well draw up the memorandum at once. You are more conversant with such things than I am;

perhaps you will have the kindness to do so."

"Certainly, certainly," answered the manufacturer; and taking a pen, he wrote a little preamble, and began to state the terms agreed upon.

At the very first, however, a difference of opinion arose between him and Fairfax, as to whether timber trees were to be included in the purchase for the sum named. Mr. Hankum thought that he had expressly reserved them in his first letter on the subject. Fairfax assured him he had not. Mr. Hankum, in the politest manner, requested to see the letter, declaring himself quite ready to abide by whatever he had said.

Sir Allan answered, that he had not the letter with him, but that it could be procured in a short time, and he would send his servant for it while they went over the other particulars. Taking up a pen and a piece of the committee-room paper, he wrote as follows,—

"Dearest Margaret,—Open my writing-desk, of which I send the key, and take out the packet of letters which you will find on the right-hand side at the top. If you have any doubt as to which I mean, the signature 'Josiah Hankum,' will show you. Send the packet to me by the groom who bears this.

"Your affectionate husband,

"Allan Fairfax."

Enclosing the key of his writing-desk, he sealed the packet, and gave it to his groom, ordering him to make haste and bring back an answer.

Then, returning to Mr. Hankum, he proceeded to discuss the other items of the memorandum, which were gone through in less than ten minutes, as no further difficulty occurred.

"Pray do not let me detain you from business, Mr. Hankum," said Fairfax, as soon as all was concluded; "I will wait here, and send in for you when the servant returns."

"Why not walk into the justice-room with me, Sir Allan?" said the great manufacturer; "you will doubtless be soon

upon the bench, and, by the way, there is a case coming on that may interest you, for the man is a notorious poacher who has been at my preserves up there —yours they will soon be, I trust."

"What is his name," asked Fairfax.

"Jacob Halliday," replied Mr. Hankum; "a cousin, I think, of Lady Fairfax's bailiff."

"Poor fellow," answered Fairfax, in a tone of commiseration; "I am sorry for him; he was hardly treated by the farmer who employed him, I have understood, and driven to desperation."

Mr. Hankum was not sorry to have this indication of his companion's views, for he was very well inclined to court the friend-

ship of the young baronet, who was about to become his neighbour, and he led the way to the justice-room, determined to take the best possible view of Jacob Halliday's case. It was already before the magistrates when the two gentlemen entered, but the proceedings were interrupted immediately on their appearance, and Mr. Hankum introduced the young baronet to a fat, shrewd, small-eyed man, in the chair, named Sir Stephen Grizley, knight. He was a jocular magistrate, very lenient in his way, and who seemed to look upon all the functions of justice as the best joke in the world. We must all have seen such men on country benches, and therefore it would be useless to describe him further, merely noticing, that

notwithstanding his lenity and his merriment, he had great tact in finding out the truth, by not the most formal or customary processes.

As soon as the magistrates were seated again, and Fairfax with them, the case of Jacob Halliday was resumed; and as he stood before the justices, with a wild and haggard, but not irresolute look, he turned his eyes towards the face of the young baronet, with an expression of hope, as if he expected to find sympathy there.

A gamekeeper and a looker-out proved that they had found the prisoner in one of the copses of Allerdale during the preceding night, and that a little further on they had found a hare in a springe. There had also

been found upon Jacob Halliday's person several very suspicious looking bits of wire, but none of them made up into the form of a noose, springe, or gin, nor was there any game found upon him. This was the whole of the evidence, and it was just the sort of case in which one bench of magistrates would convict and another dismiss, according as their prejudices led them.

"Now, Jacob," said Sir Stephen Grizley, "you know, my good fellow, you are a terrible poacher."

"Perhaps I may be, your worship," replied Halliday; "but if I am, I should like to know what made me?"

"My good friend, you must not put awkward interrogatories to the bench," said Sir Stephen, chuckling; "perhaps you may

say it was Farmer Stumps—Stumps is a hard fellow; perhaps the new poor law—the new poor law is a hard fellow; but I am afraid hungry guts and empty purse cannot be received by us as an apology for poaching."

"But I was not poaching then," answered Halliday.

"You were trespassing, at all events," observed one of the magistrates.

"No, I was not," said the prisoner; "the path is a beaten path, and every one about there knows it is."

"I think I can answer for that fact myself," said Fairfax; "I have crossed through the coppice by that path several times."

"What, at night?" asked Sir Stephen.

"Yes, at night," replied Fairfax, "if I understand the description rightly."

"It is the path that crosses away from the red post," said the gamekeeper, in a surly tone; "people do go along it, I know, but they've no right, and they had better not let me catch 'em."

"In regard to the right," said the young baronet, "I can form no correct judgment; but I know that it is frequently used by people of all classes, and it was first pointed out to me by the late Mr. Graham, as a short cut from his house to the moor."

"What do you say to all this, Hankum?" asked the jolly chairman; "if you are fond of roast pheasant, you must block up that path, I think."

"I think, Sir Stephen, the case wont stand," said Mr. Hankum. "I love pheasant well, but justice better."

"Bravo!" cried the knight. "Did the prisoner make any resistance, keeper?"

"I can't say he did," answered the person questioned; "but that was 'cause he knew he had nothing upon him. If he had, there would have been precious work going."

"Case dismissed," said Sir Stephen; "but take my advice, Master Jacob, and cure yourself of your taste for game."

"I don't mean to be saucy, sir," replied Jacob Halliday, "for you're a good, kind gentleman, and as ready to do justice to the poor as to the rich; but I will feed my wife and children somehow; and as for this

fellow, if he stops me in that path again, he had better mind his bones."

"I'll stop thee wherever I find thee," replied the keeper, and with these mutual indications of good-will they left the justice-room.

Another case was being called on, when the groom of Sir Allan Fairfax returned, and sent in the packet of letters to his master, who retired with Mr. Hankum to the committee-room, and the first proposal of the manufacturer was read. It turned out that Fairfax was neither quite right nor quite wrong, for the stipulation regarding the timber trees was not very distinctly put, yet it might be implied, and both yielding a little, it was agreed that the timber should be surveyed and valued, and that Sir Allan

should pay one half the estimated worth. Some other minor arrangements regarding the speedy transfer of the property occupied about half-an-hour more, and then Fairfax mounted his horse and rode home to find all its sunshine clouded.

"I am sorry to say, sir, my lady is very ill," said a servant, meeting him in the hall.

"Ill!" exclaimed Fairfax, in great alarm; "what is the matter?"

"She has fainted twice, sir," said the man, "and this time we cannot bring her to, all we can do."

Fairfax passed him in an instant, and ran up stairs to Margaret's bed-room, with feelings in his bosom which he had not known that he could experience.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WORST STORM.

MARGARET GRAHAM was sitting, calmly writing a note, about an hour after her husband had left her, when a servant entered with a small packet in his hand, saying, "John says, my lady, that Sir Allan wishes for an answer directly."

The lady took the letter, and, opening it, found the words which, as we have already

seen, her husband had written from the Town Hall.

"Wait a moment," she said, "and I will bring the papers directly;" and, proceeding with the little key in her hand to a room which had been fitted up expressly for Fairfax during their absence, she advanced to the table on which the writing-desk stood, and put the key in the lock. It opened with some difficulty, for, in more than one campaign which it had gone through, the lock had been somewhat damaged, and on arriving at the inside, Margaret deranged the position of the desk on the table, and nearly threw it down. It opened at length, however, and she found the papers where Fairfax had told her, methodically tied up

by themselves. Without closing the desk again, she went to the door, called the servant to her, and gave him the packet for his master, and then returning, she shut down the upper part of the writing-case, and pressed it down to lock it. In so doing, she overset the balance of the desk upon the table, and it fell to the ground almost upon her feet; but the sudden concussion caused both upper and lower part to fly open; a number of papers strewed the floor, and a secret drawer, common in all writing-cases, I believe, came partly out. Margaret hurried to gather up the papers, placed them on the table, and then lifted the desk, when the drawer came further out, and she could not help seeing what it con-

tained. How strange is association! There was nothing there but a pair of old-fashioned silver shoe-buckles; but the sight made Margaret in a moment tremble violently. She turned away her eyes, she would not look at them at first; but, with a cheek like marble, she gathered up the papers from the table with a hasty hand, and thrust them in confusion into the lower part of the desk. The buckles were still staring her in the face; there they lay before her, and it seemed as if they had some strange power of attracting her eyes to themselves, till at length she stood and gazed at them, unable to close the desk. She could not resist it; she took them out; she turned them round. There was a mark

upon one of them as if a bloody finger had pressed it; and on the inner rim of each was engraved "A. K.," "Andrew Kenmore."

There could be no doubt of the fact; they were the buckles worn by her murdered husband at the time of his death; there was the mark of his blood upon them!

Margaret put them hastily back again, shut the drawer and the desk, and then stood, leaning on the table in thought.

"How can Fairfax have got them?" she asked herself, while a crowd of painful and terrible memories crowded upon her; "this may lead to the detection of the murderer. He was down wandering about here at the time, I know, for Dr. Kenmore saw him.

Where could he have found them? I must tell him what has happened, and ask him—yet I hardly dare. Any reference to that time or the poor old man seems to pain and irritate him. Yet it is a duty, and I must do it. It is very strange that he should be so unwilling to speak upon that which surely can wake no jealous susceptibility in his heart."

Margaret's thoughts were approaching dangerous ground. As yet the emotion she had felt proceeded solely from the associations which the sight had called up. What made her turn so suddenly pale again? The first whisper of a doubt was heard. Oh, how indignantly she repelled it the next moment, with expanded nostril and curling

lip, as if some one else had hinted a suspicion of him she loved. It was folly—madness to think of such a thing. What, Fairfax, the brave, the noble, the generous, to hurt a poor old man like that! But, oh! that clinging thing, doubt, how it adheres to the human mind when once it has got the least hold! She asked herself whether the lover might not have met the husband, and whether some quarrel might not have ensued? A chance blow!—Heaven and earth, how her brain reeled! That mysterious hundred pounds which he had more than once mentioned, without ever stating how it had been obtained, telling her he could not explain—his abhorrence of the subject of her ill-starred marriage—of

the very name of Kenmore—all came rushing upon her in a moment.

"Nonsense, nonsense," she cried; but the agitation of the very thought was too much, and she fell fainting upon the floor.

She did not lie there long, for the man-servant came seeking her to tell her that Ben Halliday was in the hall, and wished to speak with her. When he found his fair mistress fainting on the carpet, he rang loud, and called for help, and Halliday himself ran in with the maid. When laid upon the sofa, a little water sprinkled on her face soon brought Margaret back to consciousness, and when her recollection fully returned, she felt ashamed of the agitation she had experienced, and its cause. Rising

gracefully from the couch, she thanked the faithful people round her, said she was better, and seeing Halliday there, asked if he wanted anything.

"Yes, my lady," replied the good man; "but it will do quite well another time."

"No, Halliday, no," she answered; "I am nearly well again now. I will speak with you in a minute," and she put her hand to her head as the same train of thoughts which she strove to banish returned. "What is it, Halliday?" she inquired.

The man paused, looking at the servants, and then replied—"Another time will do quite well, my lady."

"Leave us, William, and you, too,

Martha," said Margaret, speaking to the footman and her maid. "Now, Halliday, what is it?"

"Why, it was first about my cousin Jacob, my lady," replied Ben Halliday; "I have never yet liked to ask you to give him work, for, poor fellow, he has been driven by poverty and other things to do a good deal that he ought not to do, and I have helped him as far as I could myself; but he spoke to me about it the other day, and seemed very much vexed that he could not earn his bread honestly, and he promised, upon his word, if you would give him a trial, he would never do a wrong thing again. I told him that I would let you know what he said, but that I would not

hide from you that I knew he had been a good deal out poaching; but I do believe it was only to feed his wife and boy.

"Well, try him, Ben," replied Lady Fairfax, with an absent air, "but only you must see he keeps his word. Was there anything else you wished to say?"

"Nothing, my lady," replied Ben Halliday, "but only, if Sir Allan had been at home, to give back something he left at my cottage one morning, between two and three years ago."

"Ah, when was that?" asked Margaret, eagerly.

"Oh, ma'am, it was just at a time that is not pleasant to speak of," replied the good man; "he came so kindly—it was the

very morning after, and hardly daylight; and when he found how ill I was, he gave me five sovereigns. When he went away, we found a key upon the floor, just where he had been sitting. He must have dropped it when he took out his purse, I think, and I have always been wishing to give it back, but have forgotten."

"The morning after?" said Margaret, gazing at him with a straining eye—"after what?"

"Oh, a very sad night, my lady," replied Halliday; "when we lost a very good man in these parts."

"A key!" said Margaret—"a key! let me see it."

"Oh yes, my lady," replied the peasant,

feeling in his pockets. "Ay, here it is," and he produced a strong and very peculiar key.

Margaret started up and caught it from his hand. "It is mine," she said, with a gasp, gazing at it with deep melancholy —"it is mine."

She knew it too well; it was the key of Kenmore's iron safe, and the next moment she fell back again in another death-like swoon.

"What a fool I was to talk to her about the good Doctor's murder," said Halliday, running to the door to call the servants. But this time all their efforts were unavailing to recal her to herself, and they had carried her to her bed-room

about five minutes, when Fairfax himself returned.

He was by her side in a moment; he held her in his arms; he directed prompt and judicious means for her recovery, and in about a quarter of an hour, Margaret opened her eyes again, and found her head resting on her husband's bosom.

Who can tell the emotions of that moment? love, confidence, fear, doubt, suspicion, mingling in the most strange and fearful chaos that ever found place in human heart. She lay there and sobbed, and Fairfax soothed and supported her, utterly ignorant of all that was passing within. She grew a little calmer, but fits of deep and intense thought seized her, which he

could not at all comprehend; and though she declared she was better, and rose from her bed, re-adjusted her dress, and strove to appear as ordinary, her manner was so different from that of the frank, straightforward, warm-hearted Margaret Graham, that her husband was pained as well as alarmed. She was cold, absent, thoughtful, and sometimes she gazed at him with eyes full of tenderness and affection, sometimes seemed to shrink from him with a chilly shudder. Then she would fall into reveries so profound, that he would speak without her hearing him, and start when he repeated his words, as if caught in some guilty act. The conflict in her breast was terrible during all that live-long day and the night

that followed. Sometimes the emotions of different kinds would come upon her all at once, sometimes present themselves singly. Now love would be triumphant, and she would say to herself that it was impossible he could be guilty; such deeds were not in his nature; and she would resolve to tell him all; but then again she would recollect that he had told her the news of her marriage to another had well-nigh driven him mad—that it had changed his nature and his character—that for some time he had hardly known what he did. She would ask herself, if she did tell him, and the dreadful suspicion should prove true, what was to follow then? It had well-nigh turned her brain; but still she paused and pondered,

weighing all the circumstances, thinking over all the events, and still she found fearful evidence, against which she had nothing to oppose but love and love's confidence. At one moment she thought that anything would be better than such terrible doubt, and she determined boldly to speak; but then her courage failed her. She felt she dared not; it seemed as if the first words might blast all her happiness for ever. It was plucking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the taste of which would bring death into the Eden of her love. She thought what would be her feelings if he hesitated, if he faltered, if all could not be explained clearly; of what must be her conduct if her dreadful doubts were confirmed—of the new struggles that

must take place, of the anguish and the fears that would be in store; and she fancied that ignorance—even partial ignorance were better than more certain knowledge. At length, she resolved to believe him innocent, to forget what she had seen and learned, to trust implicitly that all could be explained. To believe! to forget! to trust! Those are things beyond man's will to accomplish. She felt it—she felt that if she could believe, and forget, and trust, why not speak at once? But her heart failed her, and her mind vacillated between convictions and lines of conduct incompatible with one another. No sleep visited her eyes that night, and she rose pale and wan, and still sad and thoughtful. Fairfax sent for a

physician — but what could the man of healing do? He felt her pulse; he declared her somewhat hysterical. He could see nothing more. He ordered her some insignificant draught. He could do nothing less. Fairfax questioned the servants as to whether anything had occurred to agitate or alarm their mistress during his absence. They knew of nothing. He questioned Margaret herself, and she burst into tears, but did not answer. The tone of her mind was shaken with the struggle. The natural frankness of her character was overawed by a great terror, and though now she longed to speak, she could not.

Fairfax was puzzled, grieved, alarmed, somewhat offended. Another day passed, and another. The physician saw her twice,

and hinted that there was no disease—that there must be something mental. Fairfax tried to sooth; but the delay had rendered that conduct still more difficult, which she had at first shrunk from, and had given suspicion stronger hold upon her mind. The facts had arranged themselves more clearly. Two articles of the dead man's property seemed clearly traced to her husband's possession. He had suddenly, as he acknowledged, become possessed of a sum of money, which she knew must have been about the amount on the murdered man's person; he must have been near the spot at the time; he never explained how he had obtained that sum; he studiously avoided naming the dead. She tried hard

not to believe it, not to doubt, not to suspect, but still she could not avoid a sensation of shrinking fear when he touched her.

Fairfax perceived it, and his spirit took fire. His brain, too, seemed to give way. He grew cold, and haughty, and stern. He called Margaret — his Margaret — "Madam;" and at length, on the morning of the fifth day, he started at daybreak from the bed which had become a place of torture for him, and which Margaret had bedewed with her tears; and telling his servant that he should most likely not return all day, he went forth and took his way in search of utter solitude towards the moors.

Part the Fourth.

THE CLEARING OF THE DAY.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DISCOVERY.

It was a clear, fresh morning, in the very infancy of autumn; the air was cool and free; the sky chequered with passing clouds. Fairfax took off his hat to let the wind come freely upon his burning brow. It seemed to revive him, to calm his thoughts, and they arranged themselves into more regular trains as he walked on and began

to climb the hill. "There is something dark and mysterious under this," he said to himself. "What can it be? To suppose her guilty of any evil act, of any deceit whatever, is out of the question—and yet this is very strange. What have I done to alienate her affection—and so suddenly, too? In a moment—in one brief moment—in the midst of our greatest love and happiness, to see so complete and terrible a change, is, indeed, beyond all explanation. But it cannot be endured longer—her affection is gone—her confidence. She shrinks from me—she does not trust me. We must part:" and Fairfax set his teeth hard, and mourned over broken hopes. "We must part," he repeated, "after so brief a period

of happiness, after such a short dream of passionate love—we must part! I shall love her ever still; but she shall shrink from me no more. She shall no longer tremble at the approach of the husband of her choice—Oh! God, this is very hard to bear."

He went on climbing the moor by the narrow path which had been followed by poor old Doctor Kenmore on the night of his murder. He did not absolutely gaze over the scene around, for he was far too busy with the internal world; but still beautiful nature has her influence, like the spell of music, which lulls, even when we listen not, and hear unwillingly. The wide, free landscape, the moor all purple with

the heath, the long lines of light and shade, the blue airy tint that spread over the whole, the flitting shadows as they wandered across before his unobservant eye, the fresh free air, were impressive of calmness and of gentleness. All that was harsh in his thoughts was softened by God's beautiful creation; a holier and more benevolent spirit seemed to pervade the atmosphere than in any dwelling made with hands, and when he had nearly reached the top of the ascent, he paused, and sat himself down on a boundary stone marking the separation of two parishes.

"Poor Margaret," he said; "I will make one more effort. She suffers, I am sure. I will try once more."

By a strange coincidence, he had seated himself within a yard or two of the very spot where the body of Doctor Kenmore had been found. His back was turned towards the ruined cottage or hut which I have mentioned, and his face towards Allenchurch and Brownswick. All was still and silent; the grasshopper was heard, but that was all. A crow winged its slow flight along, but nought else was seen to stir in the wide air; and on earth the only moving thing was a wreath of blue smoke, which rose up from a cottage chimney down far below, and curled slowly up till it had passed the line of the hill and caught the fresh breeze.

One could have heard the tread of a

beetle, and Fairfax distinguished the fall of a footstep behind him. It was a dull and heavy step, like that of a peasant; but he did not wish his thoughts to be disturbed even by a rude "Good-morning," and therefore he paid no attention, keeping his eyes fixed in a forward direction over the declivity of the moor. The step came closer and closer, so near that Fairfax thought, "the fellow will run over me," when suddenly he heard a rush and a struggle, and a loud voice exclaim, "Damn thee, wouldst thou kill him as thou killedst the old doctor?" and at the same moment a large stone flew past him, slightly brushing his shoulder and grazing his cheek.

As may well be supposed, Fairfax started

up, and turned round, when he beheld, within two yards of him, the idiot, Tommy Hicks, struggling in the strong grasp of Jacob Halliday.

"On my life and soul, he had nearly done it," said the man, holding him firmly. "I hope he did not hit you, sir. Another minute, and he would have dashed your brains out."

"Many thanks," answered Fairfax; "but this must go on no longer, Halliday. We must tie him. The unhappy creature must be put under restraint. Here, we will tie his arms with my silk handkerchief, and take him down to Brownswick. He should have been confined in some asylum years ago."

"Ay, that he should," said Jacob Halliday, aiding to bind the idiot, which was not done without a tremendous struggle; "I always said so."

"Now his legs," said Fairfax; "his own cravat will do."

"But if we tie his legs, sir, how can he walk to Brownswick?" asked Halliday, naturally enough.

"Do it for the present, at all events," replied Fairfax; "we can loose him a little afterwards." And Jacob did as he was directed.

It was all done very rapidly, although the idiot resisted vehemently, and was very vociferous shouting out, "I wont be hanged —I wont be hanged, you vermin. There

must be a crowner's quest—I wont be hanged."

Seeing that he was fully impressed with the idea that they were going to hang him, Fairfax assured him, not only that such was not the case, but that nobody was going to hurt him in any way. When he was secured completely, so as to be unable to move hand or foot, Fairfax touched Jacob Halliday's arm, saying, "Come to a little distance. I wish to speak with you for a moment."

"Now they're going to fetch a rope," cried Tommy Hicks. "Oh! I wont be hanged —I wont, I wont;" and making an effort to run, he fell forward, and there lay howling.

"Now, Halliday," said Fairfax, when they had got about fifty paces distant, "you just now used a very strange, but most important expression in speaking to that poor wretch. I heard you distinctly say, 'Wouldst thou kill him as thou killedst the old doctor?' "

"I was a fool for my pains, sir," replied the man, looking down, sullenly.

"I think not, Halliday," said Allan Fairfax; "you were acting a good part in saving my life, which was, at all events, in danger, and you gave way to a good and generous impulse in what you said."

"I did save your life, ten chances to one, Sir Allan," answered the man; "for in another minute he would have knocked

your brains out with that monstrous big stone; but I was a fool, nevertheless, for saying what I did, for, of course, now you will go and tell all about it; and I shall be forced to speak too, and get myself into trouble."

"For saving my life you shall be well rewarded," replied Fairfax; "and the law of England requires no man to get himself into trouble, as you call it. You can never be called upon to say anything that can injure yourself. I partly divine your objections from what I have heard of your pursuits; but in giving evidence in regard to the horrid deed to which you alluded, no question can be pressed upon you, which

can at all tend to criminate you. Of this I pledge you my word, and would explain further if I knew the circumstances."

Jacob Halliday rubbed his head. "Well, sir," he said at length, "you did me a kind turn a day or two ago, and I am sure you are a man of honour, and wont repeat a word of what I am going to say without my consent."

"Of that I give you my word," answered Fairfax; "but I tell you fairly, Halliday, I shall give information to the magistrates at once of what you did say to the idiot when you came up, so that an investigation must take place, and it is much better for you to have good and friendly advice as to what your own course should be during that

investigation, than to go to it unprepared, and perhaps commit yourself."

"That's very true, sir," said Jacob Halliday, "very true, indeed; and I have often thought of telling all, too, and should have done it, if it had not been for fear of getting myself into trouble. I should have jumped over that, however, if I had seen any other poor fellow accused; but I thought it was no good, when there was only the idiot to blame, for it was he who did it, and I saw him."

"But let me hear the whole particulars, Halliday," said Fairfax. "You might have placed yourself in very unpleasant circumstances."

"Not I," replied the labourer; "I never

touched a penny, and knew nothing about it, but that it was done, and who did it. The way of it was this, sir; and as I am going to tell you everything, I hold you to your honour, that you wont say a word. How the brute is howling; I wish he would hold his tongue."

After this exclamation, he proceeded as follows:—

JACOB HALLIDAY'S TALE.

"You see, sir, I was driven to desperation. There was my wife and my boy to feed and clothe, and not able to do a hand's turn to help. My wages were seven shillings a week, and the rent of my cottage

was one and sixpence. I had five and sixpence to keep and cover three persons, and that only as long as I was well and hearty. Ben and I spoke to our master about it, and he treated us like dogs, because he knew we could get no out-door relief from the Union, and that we should do anything rather than be driven into a place which is worse than a prison, have all our little goods sold, and be forced to live separate from our wives and children. One day, however, he was cursing the game which had damaged some of his crops, and said he wondered the labourers who came teasing him about low wages did not help themselves to victuals, while there was plenty of it running in the fields. So, sir, I took

the hint, and turned poacher; but I was not a bit the more obliged to Farmer Stumps, and often thought, and said, too, that he ought to be one of the first to suffer, for driving men to do what was not right, just to pinch something of their pay. Well, sir, about that time, Tommy Hicks went to live with Ben. I had had the offer of him and five shillings a week to keep him; but my wife said she'd never eat a morsel after he came into the house, and I had a great hatred to the lump too. However, at Ben's I saw him very often, and he somehow took a great fancy to me, and found out what I was about with the game, for though he is born a natural, he is as cunning as the devil; and he used to come

out and help me, and wonderful how sharp he was at it. I have often thought he must be a bit of a beast himself, he knew all their ways so well. Then came that business of the fire in Farmer Stumps's rick-yard; and I know they always suspected I did it. I did not, however, I give you my word, though I knew it was going to be done—that I don't deny. But I was very sure that, with one thing or another, it would go hard with me if I was caught poaching. I did not leave off for all that, notwithstanding and though it was a bad time of year, I used to go out to keep the pot boiling, and especially used to pick up a good deal round about that old tumbled-down hut there, for it is a regular walk

for all sorts of game from the great west coppice, where there is such a deal, down to Pemberton's farm fields in the hollow. Well, one night, when poor Ben was so ill, I came down here and set all my traps and things, and got into the hut to watch what would come of it, and a few minutes after Tommy came down and joined me; and a curious way he was in that night to be sure — madder than ever, if possible; for something had gone wrong with him up at Ben's, and he kept muttering, and cursing, and laughing, till he half frightened even me. I could hardly keep him quiet. At last we heard a gulp and a flapping, and I knew it was an old cock pheasant had got his neck in a noose, which I had stuck

between two bushes just in his walk, and I ran and got him out in a great hurry, for I was not likely to get many, and this was a wonderful chance, for it was after roosting time. I found afterwards that he had a lame wing, which was the reason he kept walking so late. I should have told you the moon was shining very clear; and when I had got my bird, I happened to look up to the eastward there, and saw a man coming down the path. So I crept back to the hut upon my hands and knees. But when I got back, Tommy Hicks was not there. There was never any knowing what he would do the next minute; and I was resolved to look after him as soon as the man was past, for I thought he would spoil

the sport. Looking out through the chink of the door, I soon saw that the person who was coming was good old Doctor Kenmore; but I took no notice, thinking he would soon go by, and then I could look after the Natural; but just when he got to those tall bushes that you see there, up jumped Tommy Hicks from behind them, and hit him a great blow on the back of the head with a stone, as big as a gallon loaf; and down fell the poor old gentleman, just like an ox in the shambles. I ran out as hard as I could, and caught hold of the devil just as he had got the stone up to hit him again. There were plenty of hard words between us, as you may think, and I had a great mind to have dashed his brains out for him,

for he answered, just like a fool as he is, that he had a right to hit the doctor, because the doctor had hit him; and I could not find in my heart to hurt the Natural. When I looked at the poor old man I found he was quite dead. There was no breath in him at all, and I felt so sick at my heart, I did not know what to do. Tommy Hicks had sneaked a bit away by this time, and after standing and looking for I dare say five minutes, I heard some people talking at a distance, and thought the best that I could do was to run home as fast as possible. I said to myself, I could think over it till to-morrow, as to what I should do about telling; and a terrible night I had of it to be sure. But when the morning

came, I fancied there would be no use of telling of the idiot, unless somebody else was accused, and I said to myself too, 'if you do tell, they will ask you what you were doing down there at the hut, and you'll get into trouble, and so I held my tongue till this blessed day."

"But I have heard he was robbed as well as murdered," said Fairfax, "and a large sum of money taken from his person."

"And so he was, sir," answered Jacob Halliday, "but it was all the idiot's doing, for he is desperate cute after what he calls *property;* and it would be a good thing if one could get him to tell where he put it all. I have asked him more than once;

but I never could get at it, for he is as cunning as a magpie, and hides away things in all sorts of holes: and now, sir, I should be glad to know what I had best do."

"There seems to me, Halliday, only one thing for you to do; namely, to go down with me to the magistrates at once. I shall give information of the attack the idiot made upon me, and relate how you interfered to save me, as well as the words that you spoke to the idiot when you ran up. You must then give your evidence in regard to the old man's death. If asked what you were doing at the hut, you can refuse to answer. They have no power to compel you; and, perhaps, by the information which you can give, we may beable to

discover some of the articles which were taken from the person of the dead man, so as to fix the crime more fully upon Hicks than your unsupported testimony can do."

"But if we don't, do you think, sir, they'll suspect me?" asked Jacob Halliday, musing.

"I think not," answered Fairfax; "for your very exclamation, in coming up to my assistance, is presumptive proof that you had no share in the deed yourself."

"So it is, sir," replied Halliday; "at least, it ought to be."

"And it will be," said Fairfax; "but you cannot help seeing the affair must now be investigated thoroughly; and depend upon it, the only way to escape suspicion

yourself, is to give every information it is in your power to afford, without, of course, doing anything to criminate yourself. We shall have some trouble to get him down to Brownswick, I am afraid, but we can obtain assistance at Allenchurch.

"Oh, ay, we can get a cart, sir," replied Jacob Halliday, who seemed satisfied with his companion's reasoning; "and, indeed, it is high time that Master Tommy was shut up, for he'll do more mischief if we don't mind."

"He has done too much already," said Fairfax, "in truth, the ways of Heaven are strange and wonderful. How many destinies have been affected by the acts of one miserable lunatic!"

He knew not yet how far his own fate and happiness had been affected.

The young baronet's expectations were fulfilled to the utmost in regard to the difficulties of getting the idiot down to Brownswick. He resisted, he refused to walk, he threw himself down upon the ground, he bit with his teeth like a wild beast when any one strove to raise him, and it was not till the assistance of two more strong men had been obtained that he could be forced on as far as Allenchurch. There, however, a light cart was procured, and Tommy Hicks being placed therein, the rest of the way was easily performed. Much was the wonder and admiration of the townspeople to see the well-known idiot brought into the

place in a cart, bound hand and foot, and Sir Allan Fairfax following, with a fresh scar upon the side of his face. A crowd gathered as the vehicle proceeded, which had swelled to many hundreds by the time it reached the door of the town-hall. Many, too, were the questions asked, but the only reply obtained was, that Tommy Hicks had attempted to dash out Fairfax's brains with a large stone, and in the midst of a good deal of noise and confusion, he was carried out, resisting, as far as he could, and borne up to a room adjoining that where the magistrates usually assembled. But what took place in the justice-room must have a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MURDER OUT.

"PRAY, what magistrates are assembled?" asked Allan Fairfax of the constable whom he found in the hall.

"Sir Stephen Grizely and Mr. Hankum, sir," replied the other; "they are waiting for Mr. Greensides."

"Then be so good as to inform them that I wish to speak with them directly,"

said Fairfax, and in another minute he was ushered into the presence of the two justices. Both greeted him warmly, and expressed their regret to hear that Lady Fairfax was unwell; but the young baronet, with a somewhat cloudy brow, brought that part of the subject to a speedy close, and then proceeded to say, "I have come, gentlemen, to lay a charge of assault against a madman in this neighbourhood, who has attempted to dash my brains out with a stone. He is a very dangerous person; and I must say that I think it extraordinary he has been suffered to wander about the country so long."

"Oh, my dear Sir Allan," replied the chairman, interrupting him before he had

quite done with a low laugh, "you know every country town must have one fool, at least, at liberty. Now, the people of Brownswick are all so wise, that we could not find a more inoffensive one on whom to bestow the freedom of our city. But to be serious, the matter should have been taken up before, and shall be now."

"I am afraid that the fact of its not having been taken up before," answered Allan Fairfax, "has led to a catastrophe of a very painful kind. I really am not aware of the formal mode of proceeding; but I have information to give, which can afterwards be reduced to proper shape, and which may tend, I trust, to bring to light the facts connected with the violent death

of a gentleman in this town about two years and a half ago."

Fairfax spoke upon the subject in a stiff and hesitating manner, which showed the pain that it still gave him to refer to one who had once, for a few short hours, called Margaret Graham his wife; but the magistrates, with their curiosity suddenly awakened, paid no attention to the mode of the intelligence, and instantly overwhelmed him with questions. He replied succinctly, stating what had occurred to him on the moor, and the words which Jacob Halliday had uttered.

"I am inclined to believe," he said, "that Halliday is willing to give his evidence without prevarication or disguise.

What he told me, I cannot, of course, repeat, nor would it be of any benefit to do so; but I am sure, that if questioned, he will throw light upon an event which has hitherto remained in darkness. I believe also that it will not be found impossible, with judicious treatment, to gain perhaps from the unhappy idiot himself some clue to the property which was upon the person of the deceased gentleman, or at all events to obtain more substantial proofs of the facts than the mere testimony of one witness of no very good repute."

"Leave him to me—leave him to me," said Sir Stephen Grizley; "I am accustomed to deal with my friend Tommy, and I will get the truth out of him by

one means or another; but we will hear Halliday's statement first. He's a terrible fellow after hares and rabbits, but not so bad a man as he is called. Poor Tommy, it seems, is somewhat worse than he was said to be; and now, gentlemen, you must not object to my proceeding a little informally with Master Hicks, for, you see, madmen are no formalists, and we must humour them a little.—Ah, here comes Mr. Greensides.—Constable, bring in Tommy Hicks and Jacob Halliday, and while we take down Sir Allan's information, you may just as well amuse our friend Tom in the corner with anything you can get hold of."

"He's awful uproarious, your worship," said the constable.

"The more reason for putting him into a good humour," replied Sir Stephen. "Show him my stick with the head carved upon it, and ask him if it is not like its master? You need not lock the doors, you know — that would look bad; but you can keep the good people out by telling them to call another day."

While the prisoner and his accuser were being brought in, the case was explained to the other worthy magistrate, who had just entered, Fairfax's information was taken, and the court constituted itself, the young baronet seating himself at the corner of the table. Tommy Hicks was carried in, screaming; but the constable did not try his powers upon him in vain;

and while Halliday was brought forward, the fury of the other gradually subsided into a wild and incoherent conversation with the officer and other men who were admitted to restrain him in case of need; and at the end of about ten minutes he was heard laughing aloud.

In the meantime, Halliday made his deposition without varying from his statement to Fairfax in the slightest particular. He omitted, it is true, all mention of the motives which had led him to the ruinous hut upon the moor, and when Mr. Hankum asked him what took him there, he replied—

"I thought I was not to be asked that question."

"You are not to answer it unless you like," replied Sir Stephen Grizley; "there is a very great difference, Jacob, between magistrates being permitted to ask questions and witnesses being obliged to answer them."

"Well, then, please your worship, I would rather not," said Halliday, with a low bow to Mr. Hankum.

"The court is at liberty to guess, Jacob," said Sir Stephen, winking at him; "and we have no great difficulty in the present case. But now tell me, — what became of all the money and other articles that were upon the person of poor old Doctor Kenmore at the time of the murder?—Clerk, have you got a copy of the evidence before the coroner?"

"Yes, your worship," replied the clerk, and went to fetch it, while Halliday answered, for his part—

"I don't know, sir. I never saw any of them but once, and then I caught Tommy looking at the head of a stick which I could swear was the poor old gentleman's. He ran away as soon as he saw I was watching him, and went into Mrs. Grimsditche's cottage, where he lives now since he left my cousin Ben. I should not wonder if it was hid somewhere thereabouts."

"Can you give us a notion of where?" asked the magistrate. "Do you know the cottage well?"

"Can't say I do," answered Jacob Hal-

liday; "I haven't been in it for these ten years, because, you see, your worship, she's my wife's aunt, and we've quarrelled."

"An excellent reason," replied Sir Stephen; "and you positively know nothing of the rest of the property?"

"Nothing at all," answered Halliday.

"Then you may fall back a little," said the magistrate; "but wait there, for you will have to sign your deposition, and we may want to ask some more questions. We must have the cottage searched."

Halliday then retired from the room, not feeling quite comfortable; for there was a consciousness that some suspicion attached to himself which he could not shake off, and he would have given two

or three fingers of his right hand to know that something would occur to fix the guilt more distinctly upon Tommy Hicks.

"Now tell my friend Tommy," said Sir Stephen Grizley, as soon as the other was gone, "that I want to speak a word to him about the cane."

The idiot had by this time quite forgotten his terrors, and walked forward to the table without hesitation on hearing the magistrate's message exactly in his own words.

"Ah, Tommy, how do you do?" said Sir Stephen; "take a seat, Tommy.—Give Mr. Hicks a chair; and let us look at the cane. Now, Tommy, did you ever see a prettier head to a cane than that? See what a

great nose there is. Now, tell me, if I had a mind to change, would you give me the head of old Doctor Kenmore's cane for that?"

Tommy Hicks laughed, but he replied, "No, no!" with a sapient shake of the head. That was something gained, for it seemed like an admission that he had it to give. His next answer, however, destroyed that impression.

"And why not, Tommy?" asked the magistrate.

"Because his *was* all gold, and that's nothing but wood," replied Tommy Hicks; "I've seen his a many of times."

"But suppose I cover that all with gold, nose and all," said the persevering magistrate.

The idiot's eyes twinkled, but still he was too cunning for the snare; and he answered—

"No, no, that wont do."

"And why not?" asked Sir Stephen. "I want that head of a stick very much, and you can do nothing with it."

"Oh yes I can," cried Tommy Hicks, thrown off his guard; "but what do you want it for?"

"I want everything of old Doctor Kenmore's that I can get," replied Sir Stephen, apparently not noticing the former part of this reply—"just out of spite, Tommy. I want to know what became of them all, and I'll give any man who tells me something very nice."

At the same time he beckoned to the constable, who came up, and a whispered conversation took place between the magistrate and the officer, which seemed to excite some uneasiness in the idiot, for he moved to and fro on his chair, and at length exclaimed—

"What is all that about?"

"Nothing to you, Tommy," replied Sir Stephen; "only I am going to give these gentlemen some marmalade."

"Orange marmalade?" asked Tommy Hicks, with a very voracious expression of countenance.

"Yes," said Sir Stephen; "do you like it?—bring some, constable. Now, I'll tell you what, Tommy; I'll give you a whole

pound of the most delicious orange marmalade, if you tell me where you put all the things that were about the old doctor when you spited him on the moor."

But the idiot only shook his head, and remained firm, till the constable returned with an immense large jar of sweetmeat, and Sir Stephen, dipping in a spoon, put some out on a plate, and sent it to Mr. Greensides.

"I'll tell," cried Tommy Hicks, at the sight of a temptation to him irresistible. "I'll tell, if you promise not to hang me—for Jacob Halliday always says I ought to be hanged."

"Oh dear, no," replied Sir Stephen; "Jacob's a fool. We'll not hang you at all, Tommy."

"Nor put me in the stocks, as old Jenkins did?" asked Tommy Hicks.

"No, nor put you in the stocks," replied the magistrate; and, at the same time, he dipped the spoon in the jar again.

"I'll tell!" cried the idiot. "Give it to me."

"No, no, Tommy. Tell first, and feast after," said Sir Stephen; but seeing a dull shade come over the unhappy man's face, he added, quickly, "I'll give you a taste, just to get your tongue in order. Take him that spoonful, constable."

The order was immediately obeyed, but the quantity given was skilfully apportioned to stimulate rather than appease appetite;

and after Tommy Hicks had swallowed the whole at one large mouthful, he cried—

"Now, I'll tell. But you'll give me the whole pot?"

"The whole," replied Sir Stephen. "Nobody else shall have a spoonful, unless you stop answering: then I'll give some to one, and some to another, till it is all gone. Now, tell me, Tommy, like a man, where did you put the notes and money?"

"The yellow ones in the thatch of Ben's cottage, and the silver in my pouch," replied Tommy Hicks; the yellow's there now. I counted it by the moon t'other night."

The magistrate looked at the notes of the coroner's inquest, and asked, "The head of the stick, what did you do with that?"

"It's at Mother Grimsditche's," said the idiot, "in a hole by the pig-sty. Ay, that is what you are wanting, I know well enough."

"And the buckles out of his shoes?" asked the magistrate.

But Tommy Hicks did not answer for a minute, leering at Fairfax with a sinister, sneering expression, by no means benevolent. Sir Stephen put the spoon in the jar again, and the idiot exclaimed, eagerly, pointing to the young baronet—

"I poked them into his leather-box through the chink, and then he came and took it away, and stole my buckles."

Fairfax had usually a good deal of command over himself, except where there

was an immediate wound inflicted upon those prejudices, or long-nourished and morbidly acute sensations, of which most men have some; but now he started up off his chair, exclaiming—

"Good Heavens!"

He sat down again the next instant; and Sir Stephen, without noticing the little incident, went on with his examination of the idiot.

"Let me see. His watch; did you take his watch?"

"No, no," answered Tommy Hicks, with a wonderfully cunning look. I knew better than that. A watch talks. It goes tick, tick, tick. I will have no talking things."

"Thank you, Tommy, thank you," said

the magistrate. "I think that will do. You may give him the pot, constable—but stay; did you take anything else?"

"Nothing but the big key," replied the idiot; and that I dropped down on Ben's floor that night; and when I saw it in Bella's hands the next day, I would not ask for it, because Jacob had said I should be hanged if it was found out how I had spited the old doctor. Ay, he hit me with a stick, and I hit him with a stone, and that is all fair."

"Give him the pot," said Sir Stephen. "I think we must commit him for trial, gentlemen; but by your leave, we will say nothing about the marmalade."

"Without which we should have done no good," said Mr. Hankum.

"The great moving powers are rarely seen," replied the knight in the chair, who was at bottom a man of sense; "but it is not only that: a scribe shows his good discretion always in omitting everything that does not give dignity to his narration. Everything important in the world has something ludicrous in it—its marmalade, in fact; but history suppresses the ludicrous, and we will suppress the marmalade, lest some foolish writer should get hold of the record, Mr. Greensides, and hold us up to posterity as 'The Marmalade Magistrates.' And now we want but one more testimony. Make out the warrant, Mr. Clerk. May I ask Sir Allan Fairfax if he can confirm this poor creature's statement regarding the buckles?"

"So far as having found a pair of large silver buckles which I had no knowledge of," replied Fairfax, "I can fully. I had left my portmanteau at Ben Halliday's cottage for several days, and just as I was on the eve of sailing for India, I called and took it away. I did not open it for some time, for I had things more fitted for sea; but when I did, I found the buckles. I put them in my writing-desk, and have them now; for I felt a curiosity to know how they came where I found them."

"Pray, were you aware of Doctor Kenmore's death, Sir Allan, at the time you took the portmanteau away?" demanded Mr. Greensides.

"Certainly not," answered Fairfax, with

the blood glowing warm in his cheek, from sensations difficult to define. "I never heard of his death till I returned to England, not four months ago."

"Or perhaps he would not have taken away the portmanteau at all," whispered Sir Stephen to Mr. Hankum. "I think he ought to give the idiot something handsome; but we must give him room in the gaol.—Is the warrant ready? Now, Tommy, as a further reward for having told the whole truth, I have to tell you that you shall be removed from Mrs. Grimsditche's, which I know you hate, to a fine airy room in Brownswick, and be lodged, boarded, and clothed by your grateful country."

"Perhaps with a hempen cravat," whispered Mr. Greensides.

"Oh dear, no," answered the worthy chairman; "every sort of folly is punished in England except the greatest. Tommy Hicks's wisdom is too well known for him to run any risk."

The warrant was placed before the chairman and signed, and Tommy Hicks was quietly removed from the justice-room, eating his marmalade all the way. Jacob Halliday was then recalled, to sign his deposition, and an immediate search was ordered for the stolen property in the places which the idiot had indicated.

"I will send down the buckles immediately," said Sir Allan Fairfax, as he rose

to depart; "if you are not sitting, I suppose my servant had better deliver them to the clerk?"

"To-morrow will be quite time enough," said Sir Stephen, "for I think we shall rise directly. Indeed, we might sit as long as a hen without hatching such a brood as has come forth to day. We are really much obliged to you, Sir Allan, for having brought this dark affair to light. There can be nothing more disagreeable, I may say painful, in a little neighbourhood like this, than to have suspicions continually hovering about, like dark clouds, overshadowing from time to time very good sorts of people."

Fairfax cordially agreed with him, and went away musing. By some link, he did

not clearly see what, the events which had just been brought to light connected themselves with the unhappy change which had taken place in his domestic life. He asked himself if Margaret could have seen the buckles in his desk, for he recollected that the alteration in her whole demeanour was dated from that day when he had sent her the key. But then he asked himself again, and the questions were most painful—"Could Margaret Graham have examined other parts of the desk besides that to which he had directed her attention? Even if she had, and had found the buckles there, and had recognised them, was it like her to suspect her husband—him whom she professed to love and honour above all men—

from an accidental circumstance like that?" Thus he proceeded to reason, without knowing all the facts—a course which men are sometimes obliged to pursue, but which they do pursue much more frequently than is needful—and thus he went on torturing his own heart with inquiries which he could not answer. Nevertheless—for Fairfax's character was a peculiar one in some respects—he drew a degree of relief from supposing an explanation of Margaret's conduct. That it should have a cause, though an insufficient one, was some comfort, and he said to himself, as he entered the garden-gate—

"We must have a full explanation: frankness on both parts is the only thing which can save us from misery. I shall

soon know whether I am to be wretched or happy for life. Where is your mistress?" he demanded of the servant, whom he found in the hall.

"She is in the back drawing-room, sir," replied the man, "and she told me to tell you that she wished to see you, as soon as you came in."

"Very well," cried Fairfax, and walked on.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DOUBTS REMOVED.

With heavy heart, and aching head, and languid eyes, Margaret rose from her bed not long after Fairfax had left her. She dressed herself slowly, speaking not one word to her maid during the whole time she was arranging her beautiful hair, and then descended to the breakfast-room; she rang the bell, and proceeded mechanically to the ordinary task of the morning.

"Let Sir Allan know that breakfast is ready," she said to the servant, and was falling into a fit of thought again, when the man's reply instantly roused her.

"Sir Allan is out, my lady," he replied, "and he said he should not be back till night."

"Not back till night!" exclaimed Margaret. "Do you know where he is gone to?"

"No, my lady," answered the man; "he went out on foot." And as Margaret said nothing more, he quitted the room.

"What am I doing?" thought Margaret —"what have I done? His affection is estranged. I can see it in his eyes, in his every look, in his whole manner, and I love

him so fondly still. For the first time in my life I have wanted confidence and frankness towards a being whom I love; and how terrible is the consequence! Oh, God! what shall I do? I will tell him all. Let me consider—let me try if my brain has any power left—let me take some resolution, and keep it firmly. Is it possible that Allan Fairfax could commit such an act? that any provocation, any temptation could induce him to injure a poor old man like that? What! gallant, and noble, and kind, and generous as he is, that he should do such a thing for any consideration on earth! Oh, no, no, no!—but yet the proofs—but I will not think of them. It is impossible. I have done him injustice, and now I must

do right. I will tell him all; I will humble myself before him; I will sue for pardon on my knees, and beseech him not to take his love from me because I have been weak enough, mad enough to suspect him—there, there, I will think of it no more. I will have no more casuistry; I will tell him all, and till I have done so, I will not ask my heart another question."

She became calmer upon this resolution; she tried to take some breakfast; she attempted to read; she was anxious, in short, to fill up the time in any way, lest her mind should revert, against her will, to things she was resolved not to think upon. "It will seem dreadfully long till he returns," she said to herself; "he will not

return till night! Good Heaven! if he should never return! But I must not think of that either, or I shall die;" and she gasped for breath.

Shortly after she rang the bell, and bade the servant who appeared, to tell his master, as soon as he returned, that she wished to see him immediately. Then going into the back drawing-room, where her little store of books was collected, she took several down, one after another, and looked at their pages, but hardly saw their contents. Often, during the next two hours, she took out her watch to see how the time went, and thought the day would never pass. Eleven —twelve—half-past twelve came, and she said, "Thank Heaven, it is half over.

Hark! That is his step on the gravel—he has come back sooner. He has not quite cast off his poor Margaret." But though that thought was like a ray of hope, she nevertheless trembled violently.

She heard his step a minute after in the hall; she heard the servant deliver her message, and she struggled for calmness. She had resolved what she should do, and her only fear was, that the swimming brain, and shaking limbs, and failing breath would render it impossible to do it.

Fairfax entered the room with a quick step, and eyes turned towards her with a look of some anxiety. That very anxiety spoke love still unextinguished; it comforted, it strengthened her. She rose from

her chair, steadied her steps by the table as he approached, and then taking a step or two forward, sank slowly on her knees, clasping his hand in hers. "Forgive me, Allan," she said, "forgive me. I have made you unhappy. I have acted wrong towards you—I have wanted confidence—I have doubted and hesitated foolishly and madly. Forgive me, forgive your Margaret, and do not—do not take your love from me."

He raised her in his arms; he pressed his lips upon hers; he held her to his heart, and answered, "Anything, Margaret, if you love me."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Allan," she said; "yet hear me; let me tell all

while I have strength and resolution, and, then pitying me for my weakness, and for all I have suffered during the last five terrible days, forgive your poor Margaret, though you may indignantly call her mad for having entertained the thoughts which have driven her nearly so. You will hear me, Fairfax, to an end, is it not so? You will let me tell all, without asking a question till it is done, lest my powers fail me; and then you will forgive me all, Allan."

"But put confidence in me, dear girl," he answered, soothing her, "and I can forgive almost anything."

"Ay, there is my fault," said Margaret, with the tears in her eyes; "I wanted confidence—for the first time in my life, I

dared not speak my thoughts—and that to the only man I ever loved in life. But now I will atone—I will tell you all; but first think of the punishment I have suffered—think of the torture of the last five days, and let pity plead for me. Now I will tell you."

"Nay, sit beside me here," said Fairfax; "you tremble, my love."

"I would fain kneel and tell it at your feet," said Margaret, "for as I come near the tale I feel how wrong it has been ever to doubt you, and I dread that I may not be able to make you comprehend my sensations clearly—to tell you how I longed to speak, yet was withheld by a thousand painful dreads."

"Calm yourself, my Margaret, calm yourself," said Fairfax, tenderly. "Speak candidly; for you cannot think, I do believe, that I have ever wanted kindness or gentleness. Yet first let me thank you for having sought this explanation first, without leaving me to ask it, as I should have done this day. And now, my love, tell me all."

"I will, I will," she answered; "and yet, Allan, I must at the very first speak upon a subject which I know is disagreeable to you. You have always avoided it with me and with others. Some have even been bold enough to remark upon your studious avoidance of one name, and one person, in your conversation, and it has struck me as strange; for you cannot, my dear husband,

surely feel aught like jealousy on the score of the past. You must know, you must feel, that I have never loved any one but you—that I am yours — ever have been altogether from the first."

"I will own it," answered Fairfax; "I am jealous that any one should have called you his own for an hour. I know you are mine, Margaret — mine only; but yet — would you had never borne another name but Margaret Graham and Margaret Fairfax. But it is very foolish — I have been very foolish; I will be so no more. Speak, love; I will not shrink from the topic now. What more?"

"You remember, Allan," she continued, sitting with her hand in his, "that one day

at the beginning of this week, you sent the key of your writing-desk to me for papers. Well, I found them at once, as soon as I could open the desk, for that is difficult to do."

"I know it," replied Fairfax, "I should have thought of that."

"I gave them to William," Margaret continued, "and then returned to lock the desk. I give you my word, dear Allan, I looked no farther. I should have hated myself if I had even felt a curiosity; but somehow, in trying various ways to open the desk, I had pulled it partly off the table, and in shutting it I pressed it down."

"I understand," said her husband; "it fell."

"Yes," replied Margaret, "and in so doing, a secret drawer came open, where I saw—"

"A pair of silver buckles," answered Fairfax, firmly, "which had belonged to poor Kenmore. I know it."

"Thank God!" murmured Margaret, in a low tone, as she heard him pronounce the name so calmly; but she added aloud, "Which were on his person when he left me on the evening of that fatal marriage day—which are even now marked with his blood."

"Ay? I did not remark that," answered Fairfax; "but surely, Margaret, that could not—"

"Hear me, Allan—hear me out," she

said. "My first sensation was horror at a sight which recalled suddenly the terrible deed that had been done. I gathered up the papers hastily, replaced them, and closed the desk. Then came the question, suddenly, how came those buckles there? A confused crowd of images, all terrible, rushed upon me. It seemed as if some one accused you; and I felt as indignant as if the charge were against myself; a demon seemed to recal all that was terrible; your avoidance of his name — your having been in the neighbourhood at the time—your having suddenly received a sum of money to the same amount that was upon his person, which you said you would not explain; all came whirling through my

brain in a moment. I felt sick and giddy, and I fainted."

"Suspicion—oh, what a dreadful thing is suspicion!" said Fairfax.

"Most dreadful," answered Margaret; "but do not suppose I gave way to it. When I had recovered, even as I was recovering, I strove to cast it from me. I called it a folly, a madness; but yet it presented itself in various forms—I knew that you were warm in temper—I knew that you had even then loved me but too well for your own happiness—you had told me that the news of my marriage had almost driven you mad—that you knew not at the time what you did. I thought you might have met—a quarrel and a chance blow

might have occurred—I know not what I did not fancy, or what I did not struggle against."

"I see it all, my poor Margaret," said Fairfax.

"No, not all," said Margaret; "hear me yet a moment. One of those who had found me lying on the floor was poor Ben Halliday, who came to speak with me on some business, they said; and as soon as I had somewhat recovered, I resolved to hear what he wanted, in the hope of driving such terrible thoughts from my mind. I forget what he first spoke of, but when that was done, he told me that he wanted to see you, for that two years and a half ago—and he indicated the very day with dreadful

exactness—you had come to his cottage in the grey of the morning, and had dropped a key, which he wished to return. He showed me the key, Allan. It is the key of an iron chest let into the wall in the poor old man's house in Brownswick. He had shown it to me that very day he died. He had it with him when he was killed. Here it is; for I snatched it from him in terror, lest it should be shown against you; and then I fainted again."

Fairfax pressed her to his bosom. "You have had enough to wring your heart, indeed, my Margaret," he said; "but why did you not tell me all this at once?"

"I was wrong," she answered; "but oh, Fairfax, what had I not to dread if I spoke

all my feelings. I had to come upon a subject you abhorred: if you explained all, you would hate me for my doubts—if you did not explain all, what would those doubts become? I feared to lose you any way, and I hesitated and trembled and retired into myself, and felt that I was weak, yet could not conquer my weakness—knew you were innocent, yet had doubts still ringing in my ears—I was wrong, very wrong, Allan; but oh, if you could tell how I have suffered, what anguish I have endured, day by day, and night after night, you would pity and forgive me.—Oh, forgive me, Allan, forgive me!"

"I do, my Margaret;—nay, I think you well-nigh justified for all but not confiding

everything to me at once," Fairfax answered, tenderly; "even for that, there is much excuse. But never, Margaret, doubt me again, never withhold your confidence from me on any account. And now, thank God, I can explain all, though yesterday I could not have done so."

"Yet a word more," said Margaret; "I want no explanation, Fairfax. Last night you were angry with me, I could see; this morning you left me, saying that you would not return till night. I saw that your love was passing away from me. I felt it was my own fault. I sat down and struggled with myself, and I conquered. I felt that no guilt could attach to Allan Fairfax; that whatever were the circumstances, I ought

to believe nought against him. Nay, I did really believe nought against him, and I resolved at any cost to tell you, and crave forgiveness. I have accomplished the task, and in doing so have freed my bosom from a serpent that shall never enter it again. I ask no explanation. If all the world were to call you guilty, I would not believe it."

"Yet you must hear the whole, love," Fairfax replied. "This key I never saw before to-day; the good man made a mistake. It was dropped in his cottage by the same person who placed those buckles in a portmanteau I had left there—in a word, Margaret, by the murderer of poor Doctor Kenmore; I will not call him your husband,

for he was not so. And now, Margaret, I have this very day discovered and brought to light who was the assassin—and that, too, strange to say, without ever knowing, till an hour ago, when he confessed the fact, that these buckles had belonged to the good old man he killed."

"Then he has confessed!" cried Margaret, with an exclamation of joy—"he has confessed! Then there can be no more doubts."

"None," replied Fairfax; "for he has confessed where he hid the property, though not in exact terms acknowledged the deed."

"But how did you discover it?" exclaimed Margaret, "when every inquiry has hitherto been made in vain."

Fairfax smiled faintly. "I made the

discovery, my Margaret, by a very singular coincidence," he said, and, at the same time, he put his arm round her, and held her to his heart. "Do you know, love, that at the very moment when I was sitting on the moor, and thinking I could not live without Margaret, but that I would rather die than live without her love, she had nearly lost a second who has called her husband, on the very same spot where the first fell, and by the very same hand."

Margaret turned as pale as marble, and Fairfax clasped her closer to him, saying—

"Do not agitate yourself, love. You see I am here—safe, unhurt."

"Oh, Fairfax," she answered, in a low and trembling voice, "if you had died then,

when I was wringing your heart by injurious doubts and weak hesitations, what would my fate have been?—distraction; it could have been nothing else—or death. Good Heaven, you have a scar on your face, too. He must have struck you. Oh, Allan, Allan!" and she hid her eyes and wept upon his bosom.

"He hurt me hardly at all," replied Fairfax, "for he was seized, at the moment he was about to dash a large stone upon my head, by a poor man, named Jacob Halliday. He then threw it with all his force, but it missed me, merely grazing my cheek."

"The idiot! it was the idiot!" cried Margaret, looking up, and at once reaching

the right conclusion from her knowledge of the unhappy man's malicious disposition. "You struck him, Allan, and I have heard before he never forgives a blow. But how did you discover the other crime?"

"I will tell you, dearest," replied her husband; and he proceeded to relate all that had occurred shortly, but with sufficient accuracy to show her that all doubt respecting the murder of the old man was at an end.

"And now," continued Fairfax, "there remains but two things to be explained. The one, I shall perhaps have difficulty in explaining—and yet I know not. Others might not comprehend it, yet you may. The second must, for the present, remain un-

explained, perhaps for years—perhaps for ever. But Margaret will not doubt me now—"

"Oh, no, no, never!" she cried; "and do forgive me, Allan—and forget, if possible, that I have ever been so weak, so wrong."

"I will never refer to it again," answered Fairfax, "nor think of it, my love. That is, my thoughts shall never rest upon it for one minute. But to my further explanation. My love for you, Margaret, has been from the first of no ordinary kind. It has been the one passion of my whole life; you, you alone, throughout my existence, have been the single object of my strongest affections. In our union I am as happy as my brightest dreams anticipated; but in almost every

sky there is some cloud, be it no bigger than a man's hand—it were not well for us were it otherwise. I feel, and have ever felt, that you should be mine—mine alone."

"And so I am," cried Margaret, "so I have ever been."

"But another has called you his wife," said Fairfax—"another has called you Margaret."

"He did so from my birth, Allan," she replied; "you might as well be jealous of my father."

"It is not jealousy, dear girl," he answered; "but whatever it is, I will banish it; for it has produced evil, and I feel that it is wrong. Yet such have been my feel-

ings, love; and they made the very thought of that sad time hateful to me. I never could bear to speak of you, to think of you but as Margaret Graham—as my Margaret. It was folly, it was a disease, and cured it must and shall be. But even errors, my Margaret, have sometimes beneficial consequences. Had I not had this fault towards you—and I feel that it is a fault towards you—I might have thought it harder, stranger, that you, so universally frank and candid, should not have trusted at once all your thoughts to him you love."

"Oh, Allan," replied Margaret, "love can be so intense as to become timid; nay, more, I believe in a woman's breast

its timidity is in proportion to intensity; but I will promise two things, Fairfax—never again to conceal from you anything I feel or think, and never to refer again to that ill-fated marriage, or to the good old man who proposed it, I believe, solely from charitable and benevolent feelings."

"No, no, Margaret," replied her husband; "to the first promise I will keep you, my love; but with regard to the second, not only do I set you free, but I will speak to you myself of Doctor Kenmore. You conquered yourself, dear girl; an honest frankness and sincerity triumphed in the end over fear, and timidity, and doubts, for which there was a strange and extraordinary

cause. I will conquer myself, too; and in the end there shall be nothing not to be spoken of between Margaret and her husband."

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST MYSTERY.

But little more remains to be told of the history of Margaret Graham, though a word or two of explanation between her husband and herself was left unsaid for two or three years, and, therefore, it should be related at the end of the tale. Previously, however, one or two little circumstances, affecting several persons mentioned in this history, had better be noticed.

The personage who acted so conspicuous a part in all the events related—I mean Tommy Hicks, the idiot, was brought to trial for the murder of old Doctor Kenmore, and the money, the head of the stick, and all the other articles which he had stolen from the person of the deceased having been discovered by the indications which he gave, and the state of his mind having been clearly proved, it was not difficult to come to a decision as to what was to be done with him. He was consigned for life to an asylum, where he is deprived of the power of doing further mischief; and, in short, as so frequently happens in England, that was done at last which should have been done at first. One or two circumstances came out at the trial, which gave cause to suspect,

and, perhaps, more than suspect, that to the hands of Tommy Hicks was to be attributed the fire in the rick-yard of Farmer Stumps; and with a convenient enlargement of the idea, not unusual in all communities, every one of the numerous fires which had occurred during several preceding years was laid upon the shoulders of him who was known to have been guilty of lighting one.

Jacob Halliday did not altogether escape without suspicion, not of having wilfully prompted the idiot to the act, but of having suggested it by his fierce declamations against the tyranny to which the poor were subject. He had obtained at this time sufficient employment to maintain himself comfortably upon the lands of Lady

Fairfax, but Jacob was of somewhat of an unsettled disposition; he had heard a great deal of wealth and independence to be obtained in another continent; and having drawn some aid from his cousin Ben, who is now a wealthy and prosperous man, he betook himself to the Land of Liberty and Repudiation. Ben Halliday thrives and prospers; his eldest son gladly quitted the manufacturing districts to regain health, and enjoy tranquillity in rural occupations. The girl Susan hung between life and death, health and sickness, for several months, but of all the medicines that ever were prescribed, the most efficacious for diseases of the stomach, the heart, and the chest, are prosperity and happiness, and on

these she recovered. Charley has grown a fine stout boy, and is already able to assist his father in many things.

There are only two other persons, I believe, except Sir Allan and Lady Fairfax, in whom the reader will take any interest. Sir Stephen Grizley was, at the time we have been speaking of, a widower without children. It is an uncomfortable state, for one misses sadly (to say nothing of more weighty things) all the little pleasures and all the little annoyances of married life. In short, existence becomes a stagnant pond that wants stirring. Sir Stephen resolved to bring a stream of fresh water through it, and to marry again. It was wonderful what an interest he began to take in the

arrangements of the Mount Cottage after Miss Harding became its possessor. He offered her a great deal of good advice upon many things, much of which she did not take; and then he offered her his hand, which, after a little consideration, she did take. Though she was past forty, she still retained traces of beauty. Sir Stephen was fifty-two, and had never been pretty; but he was an excellent and amiable man, and though an original in his way, was easy in his temper and gentlemanly in his habits. It was by no means an ill-assorted union, and proved a very happy one.

Allerdale House and the estate attached to it became the property of Sir Allan Fairfax. He removed some of the improve-

ments of Mr. Hankum, but did little or nothing himself to the building, or the grounds, except restore them both to the state in which they had been left by Mr. Graham. Margaret felt that it was a compliment to her father's memory, and was grateful for it, though not a word was said by either upon the subject. They both loved the spot, and, every year, visited it in the early autumn, wandering with love undecayed through scenes where love first began, and with every object around them recalling some happy hope of early years to lend new lustre to fruition.

It was there, in the month of September, and towards nine in the evening, that Fairfax and his fair wife and an old brother

officer, who had been major of his regiment, were seated after dinner, on the day that the latter had come down in somewhat bad health, to pass a week or two with his friend. They had dined at six, so that they had remained chatting together some time after the dessert was put upon the table, calling up old scenes, and going through past campaigns. Margaret sat and listened with interest and love and pride, for assuredly all she heard told to her beloved husband's advantage, and sometimes she would ask for further details of adventures barely referred to by the two officers; and then they would sit for several minutes silent, musing over the past, or enjoying the present, while to the mind of

each the shadowy end of the dining-room would become peopled with the images of memory or fancy.

"Do you know, Fairfax," said the old major, at length, "that poor Harrington is dead."

"No, indeed," replied Fairfax, "I had not heard of it. Where did he die?"

"In Paris," replied the other. "It was put in the papers that he died suddenly; but some people say he committed suicide."

"I hope not," said Sir Allan; "that would be, indeed, a sad termination to not a very satisfactory career. I met him once after he sold out of ours, and we passed an evening together at an inn. He was then in good spirits, because his purse was full;

and you know, Leslie, it was only when his pocket was empty that he was melancholy. Nothing on earth seemed to touch him but that."

"Ah, poor fellow, I am sorry for him," answered the old officer; "he was a wild, thoughtless dog, but a fine, honourable fellow."

Fairfax was silent, but at length he said, "He was generous and kind-hearted, but I think very weak, which often placed him in very unpleasant situations. He was uncommonly clever, too, in almost everything he undertook; but I do not know a more dangerous combination for a man's own self, or for others, than ability and weakness."

"I believe you are right," answered the major; "and certainly poor Harrington had both."

Here the conversation in regard to this individual ended; and shortly after, the party returned to the drawing-room; but even there they did not protract the night long; for Lady Fairfax was in a rather delicate situation, and about half-past nine she retired. She had not been long in her dressing-room when her husband joined her, and sitting down by her as she lay upon the sofa, he said—

"Leslie has gone to bed, for he is sadly shaken, poor man; and so now, Margaret, I have come up to tell you a story."

"Indeed!" she said. "Is it an oriental tale, or a romance of our own land?"

"A little of both, dear girl," he answered.

"You remarked, I dare say, our conversation about Captain Harrington?"

"Yes, I did, and was sorry for him, poor man," replied Margaret.

"Well, my love, upon his life hung the only secret I had from my Margaret," said Fairfax. "I gave my honour that I would not reveal it as long as he lived, not even with the reservation of the name; for one part of the transaction was so well known, that the other, if told, was sure to be fixed upon him. When I was a very young man, Margaret, I entered into a distinguished regiment of foot, my good uncle having purchased a commission for me, by very strenuous saving, for he was

liberal, and a somewhat careless man by habit and disposition, and no income would have been more than sufficient for him. I was in that regiment when I first knew you, and one of my early companions, as a fellow ensign, was this very Harrington. He had exchanged into a cavalry regiment some years before I came hither, but I, having no means of paying the difference, remained where I was. After the sharp dismissal I received from your mother, and the vanishing of all hope of hearing from you or your father, I became so gloomy, that my uncle inquired the cause, and I told him that I was most anxious to see active service, and to obtain some means of distinguishing myself. The only field

open was India, and the kind old man found means to raise upon his books and pictures, which were to have formed a little fund for me after his death, the sum required for the purchase of a troop in the very same regiment into which Harrington had previously exchanged. I found him with the regiment when I joined, and was delighted to do so, for he was a most agreeable man, and none of the bad points of his character had become apparent during our first short acquaintance. I found him very much changed, however. He was fond of gambling and the turf, had a good deal of the braggadocia about him, and though still showing great abilities, and a heart that was generous and noble

by fits and starts, I did not feel that a man of such very loose principles was one of whom I could make my friend. I believe he was piqued by a certain degree of reserve which he remarked in my manner; but he took no notice, and we remained upon civil and kindly terms. One night he was boasting that such was his luck, as he called it, at cards, that he could feel sure of dealing himself a certain number of honours upon the average every time the cards were dealt for ten times. The thing struck me as ridiculous, and, excited by the conversation, I exclaimed, 'Nonsense, Harrington—I will bet you a hundred pounds you do not!' He instantly said, 'Done!' I could not

retract, and the next night the trial took place in his rooms before a number of brother officers. He won the bet, and I paid my hundred pounds, though it left me poor for the next twelve months. The matter was over, and I thought no more of it but as of a very foolish act on my own part, the punishment for which would cure me, for the rest of life, of using a silly expression to prove my conviction. Harrington sold out of the regiment some time after, and returned to Europe, and I followed, upon leave, at the end of six or eight months. By this time my poor uncle was dead. I had nothing but a very small annuity and my pay. My funds were nearly exhausted when I

arrived in England; and I had no means of purchasing the papers on which my fortunes, as it turned out, depended—purchasing, I may call it, for although the rascal asserted that he detained them as payment for a charge against my poor father, which the executors had refused to pay, that was all a pretence. However, hearing of your father's disasters, I came down to Cumberland at once. I wrote to you: you answered me, and I set out for London again like a madman, to hurry forward the sale of my commission. It was rendered unnecessary by the event I am going to tell you. At a small town in Huntingdonshire, the axle of the stage broke about nine o'clock in

the evening, and I was forced to betake myself to an inn till the damage could be repaired. I found there in the passage my old fellow-soldier Harrington, who seemed, and I believe was, exceedingly glad to see me, invited me to his rooms, and entertained me as well as the place would permit. He saw, however, that I was in low spirits, and very anxious to proceed, and he put many questions in a more delicate manner than I could have expected, from what I had before known of his character. I answered him frankly, that I was hurrying to London to sell my commission, as I believed that my whole future prospects in life might depend upon the command of a small sum of money

which I did not possess. He immediately offered me assistance; but that I at once declined; for he was not one, Margaret, towards whom I would lay myself under any obligation. I told him I did not borrow money, and that reply seemed to throw him into a deeper fit of meditation than I ever saw fall upon him before. He asked, what did it matter accepting the loan of a few hundred pounds from an old friend, when they could be easily repaid at any time by the very step which I was rashly going to take at once without necessity. I told him that one hundred was all I required, but that even that I would not borrow.

"This plunged him in deeper medita-

tion still, and then he sent for wine, and drank a good deal. I had often before remarked, that when affected by wine, a naturally frank and generous character appeared in him, which had been terribly obscured by the effects of vices and weaknesses, and as he warmed on the present occasion, he urged me more strongly to accept the money that I required. I still resisted, and told him my resolution was unalterable; and, at length, he became considerably agitated. He rose, paced up and down the room, and at length, grasping my hand, he said, 'Take it, Fairfax, take it; and relieve my mind of a great load.' I replied, with something like a smile, that I did not see how it would relieve his mind

to burden mine; but that such was my firm resolution, that I would not borrow money, if my whole fortune in life depended upon it. I cannot tell you all the steps which led to the conclusion. He had recourse again and again to the glass; he seemed to waver and hesitate; and, indeed, his conduct appeared so strange in pressing assistance upon a man unwilling to receive it, that I began to think his intellect was affected, when suddenly he became calm, sat down, and said, "Now, Fairfax, you must take the money, and I will tell you why; but you must promise me, upon your word of honour, never to repeat what I am going to say as long as I am alive.' I readily promised; and he went on to say, 'I can

bear my feelings no longer, Fairfax. When first I played you a very sorry trick, I tried to pass it off upon myself as a good joke. I thought I could tell you at any time, and would tell you some day. But month after month passed by, and I did not tell you; and then I sold out, and we were separated, and I became ashamed to write to you; but still I resolved to tell you the whole facts, and make restitution as soon as ever I saw you. I should have done it already, but you seemed to give me an opportunity of following a middle course, and not risking your good opinion for ever, while I restored to you what is your own. Do you remember a bet between us, in regard to how many honours I would deal myself so many

times running, and that I won a hundred pounds of you?' I replied, I did perfectly; and his rejoinder was, "Well then, Fairfax, I tell you that sum was not won fairly. You piqued me by contradicting my assertion regarding my uniform luck, before the whole mess, and I determined, right or wrong, that you should lose your bet. I marked the cards, Fairfax, by running a needle through the corner of every coloured card, I re-enclosed them carefully in their covers to escape all suspicion, and completely deceived you and every one present. I thus dealt myself what I pleased, and won your money most unjustly. Now you can have no scruple at receiving it again.' At first, my love, I would hardly believe

him, and thought it was a generous sort of trick he sought to play me; but he assured me most solemnly, that he had stated the plain facts; and, as you may easily imagine, I had no further hesitation in taking that which was my own. He eagerly bound me to the promise I had made, however, never to repeat his confession to any one as long as he lived, and I repeated it with the full determination of keeping it inviolate. Nothing on earth would have induced me to relate this story before his death, and probably I should not do so now, but that I feel there should be no subject whatsoever on which I and Margaret should not be able to speak. To you only, dear girl, shall the tale ever be told; for though I

could not agree with Leslie in thinking poor Harrington 'a fine honourable fellow,' yet I think there was in him, as there is in a great part of the better classes in England, much that is very good, though the better qualities were, in his case, smothered by vices, follies, and affectations."

Such was the tale told by Fairfax to Margaret, and such the incident, which, in a former chapter of this work, I longed to tell at the time, and promised to tell afterwards; but as he did not think fit to divulge the secret then, how could I?

THE END.

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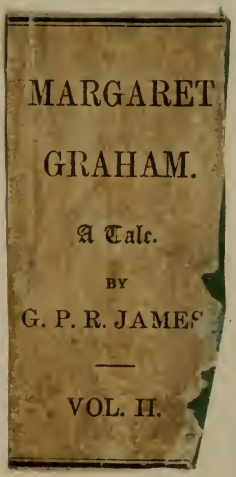
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